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# An insult to authority: The Jewish means to a Nazi end

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An Insult to Authority: The Jewish Means to a Nazi End

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JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis attempts to place smuggling on the Warsaw Ghetto until the Great Deportation into the larger context of economic warfare as a Nazi policy. This largely overlooked aspect of Jewish response provides valuable insights to the larger debate because of the experimental nature of administration in the Government General and its potential impact on determining the course of the Final Solution. The paper alleges that Jewish smuggling was less a form of resistance than an aid in alleviating German responsibility for their captives' welfare and an effective method of management. Research tools included an abundance of primary documents for finding the basic facts and incidents of smuggling. Secondary research established the arguments to seat the discussion in. Smuggling is viewed alongside the policies that made it necessary including the city's takeover, landscape adjustments harshening decrees and the establishment of the ghetto. The work's greatest value lays in the possibility of facilitating a greater understanding of the larger Nazi policy framework.

## INTRODUCTION

Jewish smuggling was a fulfillment of the Nazi goals of economic warfare in Poland. Before the military reverses in the Russian campaign that began 22 June 1941 and the escalation to indiscriminate slaughter of Jews, all policies pointed to a Jewish world separate from the Aryan one that would rely on complex interactions to achieve Nazi objectives. Stealing property, limiting wealth, manipulating strength and ghettoization were steps in the creation of an artificial world. The finishing touch on this world was the debasement of Jews to such a degree that they could not even operate in the same market, use the same currency or live beyond a subsistence level. As Jews snuck over or through the wall, bribed gate guards and received contraband, some quarters received confirmation that their ambitions were being realized.

Eventually, segregation would prove insufficient. But this study focuses on the period from the Nazi victory over Poland in 1939 until early 1942, when strict enforcement of the death decree for smugglers became the norm and the Great Deportation began. Until then, smuggling served some Nazi purposes and was therefore tolerated or even encouraged.

The Warsaw Ghetto was the consequence and embodiment of Nazi economic policy expressed in land. Separating races, claiming land and removing undesirables were all bound up as the practical motivators and outcomes of racial invective. When it came time for application in Eastern Europe, the policy evolved in unpredictable ways but had one effect no matter how it was applied or the infighting that accompanied it. Reality was reconstructed. Social landscapes changed in advance of the physical one. In the chaos that frequently characterized Nazi Jewish policy, economic warfare of one shade or

another was a consistent factor. The application and aims of economic policy varied, another characteristic of Nazi administration, and the typical political infighting and mercurial outlooks accounted for as many procedural alterations in regard to European Jewry as the changing fortunes of war.

Warsaw's Jewish Ghetto is a case in point. Jews had lived in Warsaw since at least the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Despite prevalent anti-Semitism, Poland had been tolerant enough to cause some wonder at the close resemblance between the word Poland and the Hebrew term *polin*, meaning 'here thou shalt lodge in exile.'<sup>1</sup> Before World War II there were 33 million Polish citizens, 3.3 million of them Jews. Fifty percent of all Polish artisans were Jewish.<sup>2</sup> Eighty percent of Warsaw's craftsmen were Jews.<sup>3</sup> Under Nazi occupation, this accommodation changed. Plans evolved as the result of power struggles and changing fortunes of war. The only certainty was that from Warsaw's capitulation on 27 September 1939, the city's Jewish population became the unfortunate victims in a grand Nazi experiment aimed at erasing Jewish influence.<sup>4</sup> The experiment's conclusion is well

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<sup>1</sup> Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Josef Kermisz, Raul Hilberg & Stanislaw Staron, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 2 & 77.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2004), 121.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of ghettoization, the Nazi policies which created ghettos, and the evolution of the Warsaw Ghetto, see Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem Press, 2004); Raul Hilberg *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 2003); Israel Gutman *The Jews of Warsaw: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt, 1939-1943* (Bloomington, Indiana; Indiana University Press, 1982); Charles G. Roland *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease, and Death in the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Larissa Z. Ziedens, "Optimism and Revolt of the Oppressed: A Comparison of Two Polish Jewish Ghettos of World War II," *Political Psychology* 18 (1997); For more information about Ghetto government see: Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils of Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972); Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron, and Josef Kermisz, ed, *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York; Stein and Day,

known. The intervening steps, though no less sinister, are the subject of greater debate. Between 1939 and 1943, economic warfare reached an acme of expropriation, exploitation and exile. One Jewish response to this persecution was smuggling. While it is frequently lauded as a life-saving measure, even a form of resistance, smuggling had a sinister side.<sup>5</sup>

The idea that smuggling could have served Nazi interests or been an outward sign of achieving their goals borders on sacrilege. The act has long been held up as a glorious, even life-affirming example of resistance; if it did not always strike at Nazi oppressors, at least it hindered their ultimate goal, the annihilation of European Jewry. Yehuda Bauer defines resistance as “any group action consciously taken in opposition to known or surmised laws, actions or intentions directed against the Jews by the Germans and their collaborators.”<sup>6</sup> Roger Gottlieb defines resistance as “acts motivated by the intention to thwart, limit, to end the exercise of power of the oppressor group over the oppressed.”<sup>7</sup>

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1979); Raul Hilberg, “The Ghetto as a Form of Government” Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 450 (1980). For more about resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto see: Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994); Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to Nazi Persecution: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979); Reuben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe: with a historical survey of the Jew as fighter and soldier in the Diaspora* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Barbara Stern Burstin, “The Warsaw Ghetto: A Shattered Window on the Holocaust,” The History Teacher 13 (1980); Emil Fackenheim, “The Spectrum of Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust: An Essay in Description and Definition” Modern Judaism 2 (1982); Michael R. Marrus, “Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust” Journal of Contemporary History 30 (1995). For more about the life of Warsaw’s Jews, see: Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Collier Books, 1973); Jacob Sloan, ed., *Notes From the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1958); Betty Jean Lifton, *The King of Children: The Life and Death of Janusz Korczak* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1988); Gunnar S. Paulsson *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Engelking & Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>6</sup> Paulsson, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Michael R. Marrus, “Jewish Resistance to the Holocaust,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 30 (1995): 90.

These definitions were designed to counter scholars such as Hannah Arendt and Raul Hilberg who remarked on the lack of Jewish resistance. Arendt argued that under the circumstances collaboration and appeasement were natural for any group of people – despite her aversion to the practice. Furthermore, those who combated the order of things should be revered. “The glory of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto and the heroism of the few others who fought back lay precisely in their having refused the comparatively easy death the Nazis offered them – before the firing squad or in the gas chamber.”<sup>8</sup>

Hilberg took the stance that the Jews were made docile by two millennia of conditioning. Since the Dispersion Jews’ best hope had always lain with placation and they were unable to change. “They avoided “provocations” and complied instantly with decrees and orders. They hoped that somehow the German drive would spend itself...A two-thousand-year-old lesson could not be unlearned: the Jews could not make the switch. They were helpless.”<sup>9</sup> In fact, Hilberg wrote that those who resisted were a distinct group which he called the “unadjusted.”

These definitions are both too broad and too permissive. Smuggling was often an individual enterprise. Manufacturing was largely done in compliance with German rules and to fill German needs, particularly those of the Wehrmacht.<sup>10</sup> Most importantly, smuggling did not result in large numbers of deaths in the Nazi ranks. It was a life-sustaining operation for the Jews who undertook it for the financial benefits that accrued to some Jews, many Poles, and law enforcement officials of all stripes.

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<sup>8</sup> Marrus, 87.

<sup>9</sup> Marrus, 87-88.

<sup>10</sup> Gutman, 93.



Smuggling often did preserve life, and smugglers even referred to their decisions in life and death terms. Jewish smugglers interviewed by Emmanuel Ringelblum at the time of the first executions for leaving the ghetto were unfazed by the prospect of death by firing squad. “Jewish smugglers continue to scale the Wall, because, as they put it, if they can’t smuggle they are sentenced to death anyway.”<sup>11</sup>

That does not change the fact that smugglers were not always moving life-sustaining items. The simple truth was that a cartload of potatoes was worth less than half its weight in luxury goods such as fine foods, expensive clothes, quality tobacco and alcohol. Some ghetto memoirists, Wladyslaw Szpilman for one, downplayed the black market’s importance and indicted some of the most successful smuggling outfits. “In fact the ghetto did not depend on smuggling to feed itself.”<sup>12</sup> Indeed, some of the smugglers who moved the most merchandise were in the pay of the Gestapo and can be more accurately labeled profiteers and collaborators than resisters.

The attempt at creating a self-sufficient Jewish community in the midst of Aryan Warsaw failed in the face of an aggressor who would settle for nothing less than extermination. All measures that sought to provide a living for ghetto residents came to naught once the deportations to Treblinka began in July 1942. Nonetheless, the effort should not be disparaged. Refusing to smuggle because it fulfilled Nazi goals is tantamount to cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face. It was worthwhile.

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<sup>11</sup> Sloan, 237. (22 November 1941).

<sup>12</sup> Wladyslaw Szpilman, *The Pianist: The Extraordinary True Story of One Man's Survival in Warsaw, 1939-1945* (New York: Picador, 2000), 13.

Unfortunately, the stopgap measures could not hold out long enough for a permanent solution.

The alternatives employed here are worthy of study as crucial examples of the steps towards destruction. Though taken as a means of surviving, they were insufficient for many as ghetto death tolls rose to thousands annually and the trade imbalance could not be corrected. Smuggling was a natural result of this environment.

## Chapter I

It took only eight days from the declaration of war on 1 September 1939 for the Wehrmacht to besiege Warsaw. Although the city did not surrender until 27 September, food and other essentials quickly became rare commodities. On 23 September newly minted *kehilla*<sup>13</sup> chairman Adam Czerniakow noted in his diary: “There is no meat. They started selling horsemeat, praising its taste in the newspapers, even as stock for soup.”<sup>14</sup> Understanding his city’s position only too well, Czerniakow ordered new business cards printed in German. After Warsaw’s surrender 27 September, Czerniakow quickly transitioned from heading the *kehilla* to the newly instated Judenrat.

Warsaw’s Jews were ordered to set up a government that would be subordinate to the Nazi occupiers in all things. Raul Hilberg made this quite clear in his article “The Ghetto as a Form of Government.”

German orders were unqualified and council members were required to carry them out promptly and in full...Less stark but equally burdensome was the necessity of asking for authorization to carry out every function of government, including duties expected of them.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The *kehilla* was and remains a secular Jewish administrative body in several Eastern European countries. It usually concerns itself with charitable and social issues. In September 1939, Czerniakow was assisting Warsaw’s mayor by coordinating the Jewish citizens in defensive and mitigating measures. He would receive an additional appointment to chair the Judenrat – ordered into existence by SD chief Reinhard Heydrich – in early October.

<sup>14</sup> Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 76.

<sup>15</sup> Raul Hilberg, “The Ghetto as a Form of Government” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (1980): 101.



Polish civilians digging defensive ditches during the siege.<sup>16</sup>

Even with the surrender, Warsaw's food woes were not at an end. German-imposed controls on agricultural production together with price ceilings combined to short the city's native population. Hebrew language teacher and diarist Chaim A. Kaplan blamed Nazi-imposed price controls that carried the death penalty for emptying bakers' shelves. "Until now there was no shortage of bread. It was expensive (150 zloty a kilo), but it was available in abundance all over.... As long as the conquerors took no notice of

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<sup>16</sup> All photos and maps are drawn from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. [http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery\\_ph.php?ModuleId=10005069](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/gallery_ph.php?ModuleId=10005069)

this, everything went smoothly...but every time a regime, especially a despotic, foreign regime desires our 'good' we find ourselves in the midst of all evil.”<sup>17</sup>

The city as a whole resorted to smuggling to meet its caloric needs despite Czerniakow's bewilderment at the idea: “Could there be no black marketers where there are no Jews?”<sup>18</sup> There are accounts of river smugglers moving food on passenger barges along the Vistula River, which separated traditional Warsaw from the formerly independent town of Praga. The smugglers were generally hired hands or other lowly crewmembers who saw a chance for making money. They shunned bribing and those who did it preferred to avoid German authorities. A ghetto escapee who supported herself by working in a ship's buffet and smuggling recounted the audacity of the river smugglers. “This is what happened once: some stolen goods which the gendarmes confiscated from one steamship and the Germans loaded onto ours, thinking it'd be secure here, were stolen by the smugglers on our ship.”<sup>19</sup>

Although the city as a whole suffered, Jews were in another situation due to prohibitions against moving about freely, exchanging currency, appearing unmarked, passing a German without obeisances, even receiving reliable news about the outside world. From the beginning of the occupation, they were singled out for special edicts and requirements. For instance, along with all their Gentile neighbors Jews had to give up their radios in October 1939. For Christian Poles this was somewhat alleviated – at least

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<sup>17</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Collier Books, 1973) 105. Entry of 21 January 1940.

<sup>18</sup> Kermisz, et al, 252.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Jewish Responses to the Holocaust: Collective and Individual Behavior in Extremis* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979) 181.

in the realm of local news – by multiple newspapers. Jews were limited to the Nazi-approved *Gazeta Zydowska*.<sup>20</sup> Also, greater opportunities for concealment and better access to printing supplies outside the ghetto permitted the Polish underground to publish an array of clandestine newspapers.

Understanding the theoretical application that led to an undersupplied ghetto is essential. As Nazi Jewish policy evolved subject to its land and population policies, so too did the character of Jewish life in captive Warsaw. There is a direct correlation between Warsaw's changing landscape and Jewish life in the city. Just as the Holocaust was, in part, an outcome of the foolish extremes engendered by importing people into a resurgent Germany to levels beyond the acceptable population index, smuggling in the Warsaw Ghetto was the outcome of treating the General Government as a 'racial dumping ground' for the displaced peoples who had made way for the imported Volksdeutsche. Simply put, removing a highly integrated community from the social and economic life of its home city while burdening them with tens of thousands of friendless, stateless refugees in a freshly manufactured environment without sufficient concession for their survival made for an atmosphere below the Germans' orbit.

To that end physically and socially removing Jews from Aryan society was deemed the wisest approach to a Judenfrei utopia early in the war. This is tinder to the intentionalist-functionalist debate that dominated Holocaust scholarship in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This behavior of Nazis was not without precedent and conformed to the goals of Nazi economic warfare on subject Jews. From the earliest months of their rise to power in

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<sup>20</sup> Jewish Newspaper. This daily published for all General Government ghettos. It ceased operations during the onset of mass deportations to Treblinka in July 1942

Germany, they had passed laws to rid German cultural, intellectual and economic life of Jewish influence as well as to strip Jews of their citizenship and rights. The Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service of April 1933, the *Gleichaltung*<sup>21</sup> Laws and the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 had achieved these measures in Germany itself.

Warehousing Jews was a necessary step in this process in Poland. On 21 September 1939, as the Wehrmacht, in conjunction with the Red Army, had nearly completed the partition of Poland, Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst or SD*) Head Reinhard Heydrich issued a *Schnellbrief*<sup>22</sup> to the commanders of the *Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei*<sup>23</sup> calling for the concentration of Jews in cities as preparation to deportation and resettlement. Their exclusion from all phases of city life was to be a central tenet of this plan. “Concentrations of Jews in the cities for general reasons of security will probably bring about orders forbidding Jews from entering certain quarters of the cities altogether, and that – in the view of economic necessity – they cannot for instance leave the ghetto...”<sup>24</sup> The *Schnellbrief* also made provision for the formation of Jewish councils of elders or Judenrate.

Though given a year-and-a-half-later, in a radio address of 28 March 1941 Nazi Party philosopher and soon-to-be Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories

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<sup>21</sup> An imperfectly translated word that refers to uniformity across national life.

<sup>22</sup> Quick Letter.

<sup>23</sup> Special task forces of the Security Police. Eight special units totaling about 3,000 men attached to the regular army groups that acted much like Soviet Commissars. They were responsible for arresting subversive political elements, thereby protecting German soldiers, and eventually settlers, from hostile persons and ideology.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press and Yad Vashem, 2004), 111.

Alfred Rosenberg publicly outlined the deportation plan.<sup>25</sup> “We have to think of how and where to put the Jews. This can, as mentioned, not be done in a Jewish state, but only in a way which I shall call the Jewish reservation...For Germany the Jewish Question is only then solved when the last Jew has left the Greater German space.”<sup>26</sup>

The Nazi conquerors quickly undertook to separate Jews from Poles and Germans in the General Government generally and in Lodz, Cracow, Lwow and Warsaw particularly. The first indication of a special path for Warsaw’s Jews was the Nazi bilingual proclamation posted on walls around the city promising safe working conditions and the protection of the German state. An addendum was addressed to the city’s Jews: “they were guaranteed all their rights, the inviolability of their property and that their lives would be absolutely secure.”<sup>27</sup> From the first Warsaw’s 360,000 Jews were distinguished from their neighbors.

The Nazis were not just exporting the normal scourges of war – famine, pestilence and death – but were inflamed with a racial mission. To give their work in Poland a legal veneer required additional laws, at least in the Government General because it had not been fully included in the Reich like the Incorporated Territories.

Some of the most notorious Nazi policies imposed on Warsaw’s Jews occurred via early decrees, a favorite German method for managing Poland. Hitler made this law 12 October 1939 with his Decree on the Administration of the Occupied Polish

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<sup>25</sup> The territories extended from the Baltic states through the newly formed General Government (Central Poland) and part of Belarus to the Ukraine.

<sup>26</sup> Roderick Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, ed., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (London: Routledge, 2002), 338.

<sup>27</sup> Szpilman, 41.



Territories. Article V stated: “The Council of Ministers for the Defence of the Reich, the Commissioner for the Four Year Plan, and the Governor General may make laws by means of decrees.”<sup>28</sup> Thereafter official decrees originated from Governor General Hans Frank, Warsaw Governor Ludwig Fischer or Plenipotentiary for the City of Warsaw Ludwig Leist ostracized Jews from city life. A sealed ghetto in November 1941 completed the task by eliminating them from economic life better than any banking decree or *Treuhander*<sup>29</sup> policy could. Strict controls on the amount of necessities imported to a captive population stripped of its means established the framework for smuggling and the visible culmination of Nazi goals: Jews were separated from the market – a staple of city life – and forced to subsist on the wages of illicit trade earned at great expense and risk.

There was also the more traditional prerogative of victors in a defeated land personified in soldiers enforcing their decrees on the street through Jew-hunting and degradation. The most notable official decrees include the 2,000-złoty limit on Jewish wealth in money and goods accompanied by orders to hand over property and the order for Jews to wear armbands decorated with a Star of David.<sup>30</sup>

In his memoirs, world-renowned pianist Wladyslaw Szpilman recalled that the decrees had two key effects: one malicious and the other seemingly unintended. The malevolent aim was to remind Jews they were not forgotten. The second effect – which

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<sup>28</sup> J. Noakes & G. Pridham, ed. *Nazism 1919-1945 Volume 3: Foreign Policy, War & Racial Extermination* (Exeter, Devon UK: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 927.

<sup>29</sup> Trustee.

<sup>30</sup> The imposition of the Star of David outwardly marking Jews in the General Government preceded the same order in the Reich by more than a year.

took only about two months to register – was the foundation of a contrived environment in the form of a smuggling underworld.

Two lives began to go on side by side: an official, fictional life based on rules which forced people to work from dawn to dusk, almost without eating, and a second, unofficial life, full of fairy-tale opportunities to make a profit, with a flourishing trade in dollars, diamonds, flour, leather or even forged papers – a life lived under constant threat of the death penalty, but spent cheerfully in luxurious restaurants to which people drove in rickshaws.<sup>31</sup>

The Nazis took steps to separate the Jews early. In September 1939, within days of the city's capitulation, the Army *Ost* High Command blocked Jewish bank accounts and safe deposits. Jews were limited to withdrawing 250 zloty (roughly \$50) per week and holding only 2,000 zloty (about \$400) at any time. This was exacerbated in late November when Governor General Hans Frank limited withdrawals to 500 zloty per month while maintaining the 2,000 zloty ceiling for cash on hand.<sup>32</sup> January 1940 saw this currency policy augmented once again as Jews were required to deposit all 100 and 500 zloty notes.<sup>33</sup>

These restrictions added to the atmosphere of general degradation and paternalistic superiority created by other decrees. From early in the occupation Jews were drafted for forced labor. Frank's decree of 26 October made forced labor an official possibility for Jewish men aged 14-60. Czerniakow noted having to supply 300 men at the beginning of November, their wages to be paid by the *Judenrat*.<sup>34</sup> This was followed by a decree of 23 November – perhaps the most notorious order – requiring Jews to wear

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<sup>31</sup> Szpilman, 48.

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah Trunk, *Judenrat: The Jewish Councils In Eastern Europe Under Nazi Occupation* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972) 62.

<sup>33</sup> Kermisz, et al, 109.

<sup>34</sup> Kermisz et al, 86-87.

a white armband with a blue Star of David printed on it.<sup>35</sup> Starting leap day 1940 Jews had to make an obeisance to passing Germans.<sup>36</sup>

Early December saw the introduction of laws that prohibited Jewish movement and anticipated the establishment of a ghetto in less than a year's time. Government-General Higher SS and Police Leader Friedrich Krieger issued an edict that forbade Jews from changing residence without written authorization of the German Administration Authority. Any Jews moving into the Government General had to register their address within twenty-four hours. A strict curfew from 9:00 PM to 5:00 AM was also introduced. Violation carried the punishment of hard labor.<sup>37</sup> These restrictions were supplemented 26 January 1940 when Jews were forbidden to use railcars and 14 August when they were refused passage on certain streets and squares – 27 total – at all times.<sup>38</sup> One of these places was the former Saski Square, renamed Adolf Hitler Square on 1 September. This was even prohibited to Jews on the forced labor battalions.<sup>39</sup>

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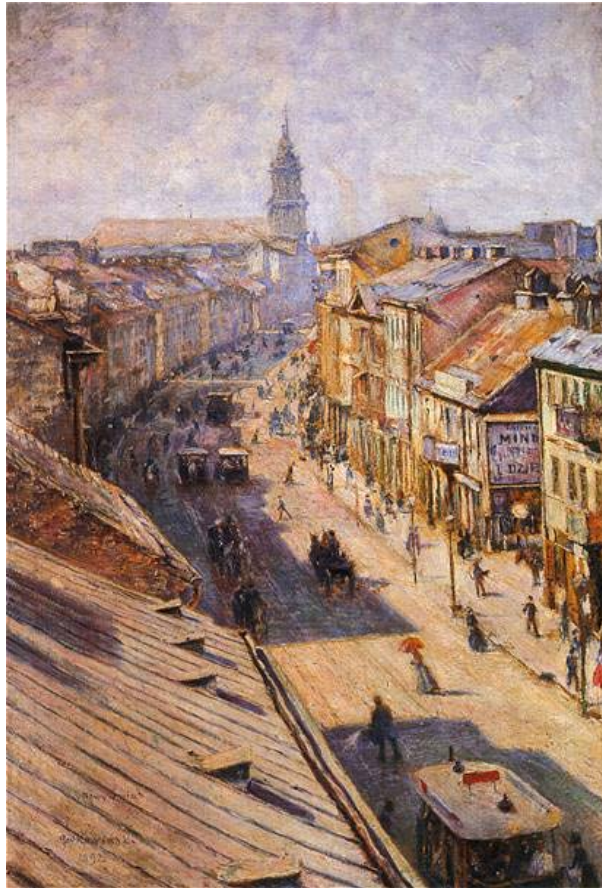
<sup>35</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman and Abraham Margalio, ed., *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981) Document No. 74. Oddly enough this order in the Government General preceded a similar decree in Germany itself, where Jews could go unmarked, in public at least, for another year.

<sup>36</sup> Kermisz et al, 123.

<sup>37</sup> Arad, Gutman and Margalio, Document No. 75.

<sup>38</sup> Christopher Browning *The Origins of the Final Solution: The Evolution of Nazi Jewish Policy, September 1939-March 1942* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004) 138 and Czerniakow, 184.

<sup>39</sup> Kermisz et al, 199. Czerniakow noted that the city administrator made an important point of this during a conversation.



Nowy Swiat in 1900. Idyllic street that was reserved for the German Quarter.

The official impoverishment of Jews and their exclusion from professions operated on a higher level than simply denying them basic rights to travel and operate with currency. Reichsfuehrer SS Hermann Goering – in his capacity as Administrator of the Four Year Program<sup>40</sup> – established the *Haupttreuhandstelle Ost*<sup>41</sup> or HTO 1 November 1939. Frank followed his example two weeks later and set up a competing organization. Each was empowered to take over businesses, installing a trustee or *Treuhand* by Army orders from the beginning of the occupation allowing for takeovers

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<sup>40</sup> A Nazi economic initiative that was designed to put Germany on a war footing in four years' time. It submitted industry to a command structure and resulted in the manufacturing of inferior materials due to its eminently corruptible administration.

<sup>41</sup> Main Trustee Office East.

when business owners were absent or the enterprise was inefficiently managed. This was supplemented by an Order of 24 January 1940 “Concerning Confiscations” permitting acquisitions “if this is in the public interest.”<sup>42</sup>

Legalized theft was also encouraged by Frank’s decree of 24 January 1940 that Jews must register their property. If it was not registered quickly it was considered ownerless and could be confiscated. Any enterprise counting even a few Jews among the owning partners was subject to this qualification.<sup>43</sup> The expropriation reached its peak on 17 September 1940, when Goering issued the order “Concerning the Treatment of Property of the Citizens of the Former Polish State.” Now all Jewish property was subject to seizure except for personal belongings and 1,000 marks cash.<sup>44</sup>

The denouement to this policy trajectory occurred on 16 November 1940 – the first day of the ghetto’s sequestered existence – as 1,170 Jewish groceries and 2,600 other Jewish shops – those that had evaded the *Treuhander* – were placed beyond the reach of their proprietors permanently.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the accumulated possessions of lifetimes and the personal dwellings families had invested in were no longer theirs. Jewish Policeman Stanislaw Adler remarked in his diary:

For many scores of thousands of Jews, transfer to the ghetto meant complete material ruin. There were relatively few who could exchange their apartments with Aryans who had been living in the area that was to be the Jewish Quarter.

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<sup>42</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat* 62-63.

<sup>43</sup> Trunk, *Judenrat* 63-64.

<sup>44</sup> Israel Gutman *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1940: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982) 72 & Trunk, 64.

<sup>45</sup> Kermisz et al, 222.

These exchanges, due to a greater demand for homes in the Quarter, were conducted with a much greater burden on the Jewish contracting parties.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943. An Account of a Witness* (Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, 1982), 33.

## CHAPTER II

The first decree to be circumvented in the return to a normal life and departure to fantastic prospects for revenue was the bread order. As per an early decree, buying or selling bread – by Jews or Christians – at greater than prewar prices carried death by firing squad. Szpilman and his family were terrified for days and replaced bread with other carbohydrates. They soon realized that bread was still available for purchase and no one was dying in transactions. Indeed, he noted that had the Germans actively enforced this order, which was never cancelled, “millions of death sentences must have been incurred in the General Government area of German-ruled Polish territory for this offence alone.”<sup>47</sup>

About the same time Warsaw – Christian, Jewish and refugee – was awakening to the possibility of normal, possibly rich, life, the SS and Gestapo were attempting to make Jewish seclusion official. The early days of November 1939 saw the first step toward ghettoization. While this attempt largely failed when a Wehrmacht general overruled Warsaw’s SS commander, the city’s traditionally Jewish quarter became an open quarantine where Germans were forbidden to live in the interests of public health. However, Poles and Volksdeutsche were allowed to remain in the section. Jews were still allowed to travel outside this district for work although their right to change residences without permission was forbidden.<sup>48</sup>

Emanuel Ringelblum saw the quarantine area for what it was, a sentence of ghettoization and imprisonment. “Gradually, a ghetto is being established. All telegrams

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<sup>47</sup> Szpilman, 45.

<sup>48</sup> It is interesting to note that this may not have the absolute sinister nature it may present at first glance. Consider that it had long been a legal custom in German cities and towns when traveling or moving to register with local authorities frequently within 48 hours of arrival.

have to be dispatched through the Jewish Council; they handle train tickets, too.”<sup>49</sup> There was no mistaking the Nazi maneuver. They had formed a figurative ghetto to separate Jews from their Polish neighbors and German masters, placing them beyond association. Now the Jews were beyond reach. Hebrew language teacher and diarist Chaim Kaplan also refused to be hoodwinked. “Nazism wants to separate everyone – lords by themselves, the underlings by themselves, the slaves by themselves. The blessed and the accursed must not mingle.”<sup>50</sup>

A ghetto was inevitable. Heydrich’s *Schnellbrief* from the invasion made that clear. In true Nazi administrative fashion, however, the details had to be worked out. Heydrich had allowed leeway for the needs of the Army or the prerogative of local administrators. “Obviously the tasks at hand cannot be laid down in detail from here.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, Łódź experienced life in a sealed ghetto from 30 April 1940 while Warsaw’s Jews were free to walk and work until 15 November due to the caprices which governed their separate administrations. In keeping with Nazi policies of economic warfare, Jews were held responsible for the cost of their imprisonment. The wall that surrounded them was built by Jewish labor under the supervision of German contractors paid by funds exacted via the *Judenrat*.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Sloan, 72. (Entry of 12 October 1939).

<sup>50</sup> Chaim A Kaplan, *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 208. (Entry of 12 October 1940)

<sup>51</sup> Browning, 111.

<sup>52</sup> This body was comprised of 24 members covering various departments of administration such as Health and Sanitation, for example. The group was chaired by a chemical engineer named Adam Czerniakow who was regarded by the Nazi administrators as mayor of the ghetto. He would swallow potassium cyanide 22 July 1942 rather than send Jews to Treblinka. The group was always controversial and his death did not end the controversy.



On the second day of the occupation, the Nazis ordered a census of the city's Jews. It found that 359,827 of the city's 1.6 million residents were Jews. 173,000 were actively employed and of those, 95,000 worked in industry, crafts, commerce, teaching or the professions. In little more than a year those people were no longer employed at their chosen professions while half the nation's artisans were separated from their trades.<sup>53</sup>

The first attempt at ghettoization was in November 1939. Then SS officials tried to use the city military commander's name – General Heinz von Neumann-Neurode – to force Warsaw's Jews into a ghetto in three days. Once von Neumann-Neurode realized what had been attempted without his consent, he told the *Judenrat* to ignore the order.<sup>54</sup> His magnanimity is probably attributable most to the infighting and power struggles that routinely characterized Nazi Government, the army being no exception to that imbroglio. This confused aspect of Nazi administration was fueled by a leadership tactic, used at the very top of the hierarchy, of giving similar orders to several people or organizations who then tried to outdo each other in a quest for more power.<sup>55</sup>

In late November 1939 the largest Jewish neighborhood was declared a quarantine area or *Seuchengebiet*. A Jewish curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. was implemented, and simultaneously Nazis ordered barbed wire erected on streets leading into the area with signs warning German soldiers their passage was forbidden due to the risk of typhus (*Seuchen*). Interestingly, this barrier expressly curtailed the movements of only Germans. Jews, Poles and ethnically German *volksdeutsche* still had free run of the

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<sup>53</sup> Gutman *The Jews of Warsaw*, 18-19 & Czerniakow, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Gutman *The Jews of Warsaw*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Some also argue that anti-Jewish measures were anticipatory on the part of local governments.

city. This theme of German limitation pervades the period and was a factor in forming German behavior.



Entrance to the ghetto with warning sign reading 'Quarantine Area: Only Through Traffic is Permitted.'

Although the quarantine area was created it could not compare to the disaster a speedily arranged ghetto would have been. Even assuming this ghetto conformed to the borders of the eventual one, about 150,000 people would have had to move.<sup>56</sup> More businesses, social institutions and houses of worship would have been disturbed than were eventually since those had yet to be intruded upon.

Starting in December Jews were further segregated apart by a marking decree, before Germany had one. All Jews older than twelve had to wear a blue Star of David on a white armband. Jewish businesses also had to be labeled. Ghetto diarists often noted the jokes current in the ghetto. Czerniakow included this one a few months after the marking

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<sup>56</sup> Browning, 120-121.

decree: “A Jew wearing an armband is addressed by a stranger: ‘General, Sir.’ ‘But I am not a general.’ ‘Yes you are, there is your star.’”<sup>57</sup> The demand for a previously unneeded clothing item created a business. Czerniakow called it the Jewish Community’s first.<sup>58</sup>



Selling armbands 19 September 1941.

Definite limits on Jewish movement and habitation came with the New Year. In January 1940 Jews were forbidden to change address without permission and Jews moving into the city could only reside in the quarantine area. Nazis also instituted laws to separate Jews from each other. Their intent was to destroy Jewish communal, cultural and

<sup>57</sup> Kermisz, et al., 115. (Entry of 4 February 1940)

<sup>58</sup> Kermisz, et al., 114. (Entry of February 1940)

spiritual life. The most egregious of these was the January closure of synagogues coupled with a ban on group prayer in private homes. Ironically, the ban was lifted 15 October 1940, just after the ghetto was announced and at the end of Yom Kippur, 5701.

Synagogues remained closed and the private worshippers were warned not to crowd or make too much noise so there was a great deal of leeway for guards to interpret whether a gathering was illegal.

These measures reflect those which in Germany created what Christopher Browning called substitute ghettoization. There, Jews were required to leave homes near the western border, concentrate in Jewish-only homes in the cities where they settled and finally to reside in specific districts. In Germany they balked at policies that would induce mass homelessness and thereby cause too great a shock to the order of things.<sup>59</sup> The General Government embraced such changes. In late 1940, Kaplan called Frank: “this tyrant whose wickedness and cruelty are even greater than that of the Führer.”<sup>60</sup>

In Germany proper anti-Jewish measures had been the fruit of years of Nazi rule and gradual implementation sometimes with the veneer of legality – as in 1935’s Nuremberg Race Laws – and with occasional abatements – as during the 1936 Olympics. The General Government was playing catch up and surpass. This was partially a product of the guidelines Germany followed as they fought eastward.

The first goal of the Wehrmacht was to redraw Europe’s map. During a 6 October 1939 speech to the Reichstag, Chancellor Adolf Hitler enumerated goals including “a Reich boundary that does justice to historical, ethnographic and economic conditions”

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<sup>59</sup> Browning, 172.

<sup>60</sup> Kaplan, 206. (Entry of 8 October 1940)

and “the main task is to create a new ethnographic order; i.e., to resettle the nationalities so that in the end, better lines of demarcation exist than is today the case.”<sup>61</sup> Key to this reorganization was economic rationalization – Polish being synonymous with mismanaged in Nazi parlance – and resettlement. The resettlement would include reducing Poland (the portions not annexed into the Reich or given to Axis allies) to 15 million “ethnics” and two million Jews.<sup>62</sup>

Reichsfuhrer-SS Heinrich Himmler added Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood, or RKF, to his titles and undertook to oversee the redistribution of tens of thousands of people. Under the guise of generosity and resolving international problems, Hitler and his closest circle made deals to repatriate people of German ancestry. The Pact of Steel with Italy and the Molotov-von Ribbentrop non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia – both signed in 1939 – contained provisions requiring that 500,000 Germans be evacuated from the South Tyrol and along the Soviet edge of the Reich from Estonia to the Black Sea before 1941.

Relocating people is no mean feat and not easily accomplished even if the people in charge of it – Himmler, Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann – later proved so adept at it. During this practice run, they were not quite as successful as in their subsequent efforts. To begin, they were trading at a surplus. Fewer Russian or Italian nationals were returning. Also, Himmler and his lot did not have the luxury of writing off percentages of

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<sup>61</sup> Götz Aly, *Final Solution: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18-19.

<sup>62</sup> Kermisz, et al., 77.

their transports since they actually intended to set these people up in a livable situation. Many of the repatriates had to live in displaced persons camps.

Poland was the solution to this housing crisis. Germans already believed the Poles were not producing enough from their land because of successive partition and Germany needed living space. Once Poland was partitioned there was an opportunity to give land to all these people plus the additional Rhine farmers who were going to be displaced for military necessity at the cost of only Poles and Polish Jews.

Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* was a product of this policy. The annexation of Poland's western chunk as the Reich's Incorporated Eastern Territories was also. The deportation of the native population, whatever their ethnicity, was its short-range end.

The deportees went to the General Government in such droves that Frank referred to his fiefdom as Europe's "dumping ground." In Warsaw, 90,000 Jewish refugees arrived in groups of thousands before the Jewish district was created. Jews forced to leave smaller shtetls and villages in the countryside, per Heydrich's *Schnellbrief* augmented the new arrivals until one-third of Warsaw's Jews were refugees.

They encountered a city increasingly off-limits, where even their coreligionists and fellows might not welcome them. Once the ghetto was formed refugees were friendless – leaving them liable to be at the top of deportation lists – and without acquired immunities from a life of city dwelling – exposing them to greater risk of infection from the illnesses sweeping the ghetto. Ringelblum sympathized with the exiles.

Frank described his mission in his diary: "On 15 September 1939, I received orders to take over the administration of the conquered eastern territories with an order to

exploit the territory particularly as a theater of war and conquered country, making it, if I might say so, a heap of rubble from the point of view of its economic, social, cultural and political structure.”<sup>63</sup> Hitler empowered Frank with virtually unlimited authority by a decree of 27 September 1939. This was another factor in the radicalization.<sup>64</sup>

February 1940 saw the General Government continuing to emulate Germany’s domestic example. Jews were limited to shopping in only Jewish-owned businesses. Ration cards were also differentiated in February. Jewish cards bore the Star of David, Polish cards were pink and Germans’ were blue. In March, cafés and restaurants put up signs banning Jewish entry.

February was also the time for limiting the Jewish use of transportation. First, Jews were not permitted to share the rails anywhere in the General Government. In a few months clearly labeled Jewish-only tram cars were introduced. Three tramlines explicitly for Jewish use eventually replaced them.

All the while, Nazi administrators were planning a ghetto. The planning took place in the Warsaw District’s Office of Resettlement under its director Waldemar Schön. The military government’s abortive attempt was followed by plans to concentrate Warsaw’s Jews in Praga across the Vistula River in February 1940. The following April, as the ghetto in Lodz was sealed, two Warsaw ghettos were pondered.

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara Engelking & Jacek Leociak, *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>64</sup> Confronted with the responsibilities and complications previously enumerated was Governor General Hans Frank. No friend of the Jews, Frank was Adolf Hitler’s personal attorney. During the Wannsee Conference in January 1942, Frank’s representative, Government General Secretary of State Dr. Josef Buhler, only asked that the Final Solution be applied to his Jews first, thereby alleviating the problems of overpopulation he had been experiencing.

It was during April 1940 that separation and ghettoization began in Warsaw. Construction began on a wall that would redefine the landscape and make painfully clear the *sonderweg*<sup>65</sup> of Polish Jews. The Judenrat oversaw the construction – under orders from the district government – around the quarantine area. In June, when the wall was finished, signs adorned it cautioning about the potential for epidemic.



Polish civilians pass by the wall 1940 or 1941.

Still, a ghetto was not yet official policy, and one must pay close attention to the subsequent steps taken over the next few months. In August, Leist decreed new districts for the city's main ethnic groups, in keeping with Hitler's stated objectives for Poland.

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<sup>65</sup> Special way. The term is generally used as a historical explanation for Germany's role in the Holocaust based on the idea it was inevitable given Germany's history of deference to authority and a selective reading of anti-Jewish acts and writings.



Again, Germans were the ones most limited – or at least set apart – by their own efforts. Poles and Jews could and did continue to live and operate businesses in each other's districts. Poles could remain in the proposed German area. Jewish refugees now moving into the city had to take up in the quarantine area. Germans could not settle on their own area even though they were given the nicest parts of town. In fact, it was not until the end of their occupation that Germans coalesced into a single community within Warsaw, and then it was more a measure of mutual protection as the General Uprising occurred and the Red Army neared the city.

Also in August and September, Jews were given new bounds they could never traverse for any reason. Twenty-seven streets – home to about 1,800 Jews – became off-limits. On 1 September Saski Square, abutting the quarantine area for the space of several blocks on its western edge with the dividing line at Marszalkowska Street, was renamed Adolf Hitler Square and forbidden to Jews.

Just before the ghetto was announced the Jewish curfew was revised to hold them in their homes from 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. on 6 October 1940. The ghetto was announced by loudspeaker 12 October. Initially, Warsaw's Jews outside the quarantine area had only until the end of October to make the move. Complications made an extension necessary.

### CHAPTER III

This latest Jewish District would only be an abode for Jews. Some diarists actually expressed sorrow for the Polish shopkeepers whose businesses would lose all value since they were included in the ghetto where the residents were being intentionally impoverished.<sup>66</sup> The initial plan to conform to the borders of the quarantine area was discarded soon since Poles effectively lobbied to retain areas based on church or school locations, the makeup of a neighborhood or a major business concern. The complaints angered many Jewish observers, even ones who had previously been sympathetic to the displaced Poles.

Ringelblum was one who consistently gave credit to his Polish neighbors unlike some who expressed only bitterness. His condemnation of the tactics some used to secure more of their city for their kind rings all the more true because of Ringelblum's past kindness. "The Poles are up to all kinds of tricks to increase the number of houses in the Polish quarter. For example, they wall up the gates of houses facing on Jewish neighborhoods; the gates facing Polish neighborhoods of the very same houses are left open."<sup>67</sup> Kaplan concurred. "The Polish side began to haggle... Thus they excised piece after piece, street after street, of the Jewish area, and the boundaries grew more and more constricted."<sup>68</sup> The frustration is understandable considering the great chunks subtracted from the quarantine area, up to several blocks in some places.

Between Leist's announcement and 15 November, Jews and Poles rushed to trade apartments. 138,000 Jews and 113,000 Poles were displaced in the resettlement.

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<sup>66</sup> Sloan, 72. (Entry of 12-13 October 1940)

<sup>67</sup> Sloan, 75. (Entry of 13 October 1940)

<sup>68</sup> Kaplan, 211. (Entry of 22 October 1940)

Ringelblum remarked: “The city is placarded with white cards advertising apartments for exchange between Jews and Christians. The whole wall near the apartment office of the Jewish Council is white.”<sup>69</sup>

Although Germans forbade anyone to call the new district a ghetto, Jews called it such. What they did not expect was a sealed ghetto. Jews, Poles and many Germans anticipated a ghetto on the Venice model. Venetians founded the original ghetto on an iron foundry – or *getto* – in 1516. In this and other walled Jewish wards, gates were closed at night but communication was allowed otherwise. Varsovians assumed the same with gates remaining shut during the newly inflated Jewish curfew.

At the prospect of an open ghetto, Warsaw’s Jews expressed a general *sang-froid*. They had experienced too many turns and loss of liberties to be surprised about another limitation. There was even an effort to find reasons for welcoming the ghetto, either as an endpoint of decrees or at least as a place where Jews would be alone. Pessimism and an understanding of German promises tainted these ideas. Kaplan wrote:

When the ghetto was established, we thought we would have things a little easier. After all, this is an infested place in their eyes, and a Nazi would hesitate to risk his life. But here again we were mistaken. There is no more likely place for robberies and murders in broad daylight than the ghetto. Here there is no seeing eye, or listening ear. The Aryans [Poles] have left, and the Nazis are not ashamed before Jews, who are not considered human.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Sloan, 75. (Entry of 13 October 1940)

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, 211. (Entry of 18 October 1940)

The ghetto's nearly 400,000 residents woke 16 November to a ghetto unlike what they had presumed. They were closed in, and only 53,000 bearers of permits for essential war work could cross the boundaries without punishment.<sup>71</sup>

The Saturday the Ghetto was introduced...was terrible. People in the street didn't know it was to be a closed ghetto, so it came like a thunderbolt. Details of German, Polish, and Jewish guards stood at every street corner searching passers-by to decide whether or not they had the right to pass. Jewish women found the markets outside the ghetto closed to them. There was an immediate shortage of bread and other produce. There's been a real orgy of high prices ever since. There are long queues in front of every food store, and everything is being bought up. Many items have suddenly disappeared from the shops.<sup>72</sup>

The imprisoned had to make do with only the resources 425 acres (only 325 residential) of built-up land containing 1,483 houses offered.<sup>73</sup> There were initially 22 entry points in 11 miles of 10 foot high walls topped with barbed wire and broken glass guarded by a force of 87 German policeman – augmented by usually one Pole and one Jewish Order Policeman per gate – under the command of a First Lieutenant.<sup>74</sup> All told, 30 percent of Warsaw's population was living on 2.4 percent of its territory at eight times the rest of the city's density, more than 200,000 people per square mile. Warsaw had 1,800 streets. Only 73 were included and hardly any of those in their entirety.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Kermisz et al, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Jacob Sloan, ed., *The Journal of Emanuel Ringelblum* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1958), 86. Entry of 19 November 1940.

<sup>73</sup> Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 60; Engleking & Leociak, 40.

<sup>74</sup> Kermisz et al, 40-41.

<sup>75</sup> Gutman, 40; Browning, 124.



Jewish Police at a barricade February 1941.

The establishment of the *Transferstelle* in December further complicated the Jewish plight. Goods going either way underwent a customs process similar to that for trade between nations. The organization head, Alexander Palfinger, was extremely hostile toward Jewish life and insisted on curbing food shipments into the ghetto. He believed the population should be bled of hidden wealth before regular trade commenced. In his opinion, Jews had intentionally and very effectively disobeyed the October 1939 banking decree. This outlook motivated the orders that forbade Jews from moving furniture into the ghetto, a largely ignored law. Palfinger's superior, Schön of the Resettlement Office, described his mission as the "effective and continuous exploitation of the labor and economic potential of the Jews for maintaining the Jewish District until the complete

liquidation of Jewish property at the time of the evacuation to Madagascar.”<sup>76</sup> This was certainly in the same spirit as Frank’s understanding of his orders with the simple removal of all Poles besides Jews.

The first phase of Nazi economic warfare against Warsaw’s Jews was consummated with the sealing of the ghetto. By all appearances, the Jews were unable to provide for themselves and a natural, sharp decrease should have ensued. However, while many died, the ghetto inhabitants proved canny and resourceful and surprised their captors. In a year’s time Frank would note in a Berlin speech that he had encountered the strangest phenomena in the Government-General: Jews who worked.

But these Jews are not that parasite gang alone, from our point of view, but strangely enough – we only realized it over there – there is another category of Jews, something one would never have thought possible. There are laboring Jews over there who work in transport, in building, in factories, and others are skilled workers such as tailors, shoemakers, etc.<sup>77</sup>

Frank’s revelation did not have much effect. In a speech to SS officers in Posen 4 October 1943, Reichsfuehrer-SS Heinrich Himmler rejected the sentiment. “It is one of those things that is easily said – ‘the Jewish people are being eradicated’...and then they all come, the 80 million upright Germans, and each one has his decent Jew. Of course, the others are pigs, but this one is a first-class Jew.”<sup>78</sup>

The ‘change’ Frank noticed was a result of Warsaw’s Jews being kept on starvation rations inside the ghetto due to the *Transferstelle*’s intransigence on its

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<sup>76</sup> Browning, 125.

<sup>77</sup> *Work Diary of Hans Frank*, Yad Vashem Archives, JM/21.

<sup>78</sup> Roderick A. Stackelberg and Sally A. Winkle, ed., *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: an anthology of texts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 370.

attritionist stance. Attritionists were based in Warsaw and advocated punishing Jews by extracting absolutely all their wealth and reducing them to the grade of serfs until they could be deported. They were opposed by productionists from the Government General's capital Cracow. Under the influence of economists, productionists felt that preventing the Jews from being a burden on the Nazi state until deportation was most important. To that end, productionists wanted to prevent the ghetto from being a money pit. Conversely, they wanted it to produce – if not a profit at least enough for the Jews to pay for their own imprisonment. Clearly, neither side bore great love for Jews, although the attritionists proved a little more prophetic as to how policy would ultimately turn out.

The difference of opinion stemmed from a March 1941 report of the Reich Board for Economic Efficiency. The Board's quandary was a product of the Nazi goal of excluding Jews from economic life, according to Party Doctrine not just a trade and industry consideration but also a public health imperative. Recall the words of the 1920 German Worker's Party Platform: "The Party...combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within us and around us, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our nation can only succeed from *within* on the principle: *The General interest before self-interest.*"<sup>79</sup>

The rub lay in the fact that an overcrowded, sealed ghetto whose inhabitants were forbidden any but the most demeaning labor outside the walls would necessarily consume much more than it produced. The report concluded that Jews would have to be employed in production to support their own existence. At a meeting 3 April 1941 Dr. Walter Emmerich of the Economic Division of the General Government phrased it so: "In all

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<sup>79</sup> Stackelberg and Winkle, ed., 65.

economic reflections regarding the ghetto, one must free oneself from the notion that it is still going well in the ghetto and that supplies are still available there...The starting point for all economic measures has to be the idea of maintaining the capacity of the Jews to live.”<sup>80</sup>

On 7 April 1941 Schön had berated his productionist colleagues for thinking that a Jew needed food similar to a human. “A work animal from whom a human being demands output was never the subject of profound contemplation concerning its needs. On the contrary...the one who maintains the animal regulates its food supply according to its productivity.”<sup>81</sup> For Schön, that productivity was wrapped up in bleeding the ghetto inhabitants’ assets, not just extracting useful labor from them. In his estimation there was plenty of hidden wealth to feed the ghetto for up to six months.

In January 1941 the 380,740 people in the ghetto were entitled by their ration cards to subsist on a quarter pound of bread daily, one egg and two pounds of jam monthly.<sup>82</sup> Separate statistical studies from the ghetto period reach different conclusions about the caloric intake of Warsaw’s population; however, they all point to distribution inequities. A 1941 Polish study found that Germans received 2,613 calories daily, Poles 699 and Jews 184. A secret ghetto survey reported consumption across professional, class and residency lines. It found that Judenrat officials consumed 1,665 calories per day, unemployed intelligentsia 1,395, independent craftsmen 1,407, shop employees 1,229,

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<sup>80</sup> Browning, 127-128.

<sup>81</sup> Browning, 128.

<sup>82</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 63; Berg, 31. Some classes of Jews were entitled to more bread. Order service members could expect 22 pounds of bread a month.



wholesale merchants 1,429, street merchants 1,277, waggoners and rickshaw drivers 1,544, doormen 1,300, refugees 807 and beggars 784 for an average of 1,125 calories.<sup>83</sup>

It did not take long for Schön and his fellow attritionists (a term Christopher Browning coined for them) to cut off food shipments to the ghetto. They were confident Jews had enough wealth to get by for a few months and it was their duty to facilitate its removal.<sup>84</sup> December 1940 saw 15,000 quarts of milk consumed daily in the city. Each German child was entitled to three-fourths of a quart. Only Germans could buy citrus fruits and any available meat. Poles were limited to purchasing other fruits at elevated prices, some meats and green vegetables. The Jews, enduring their first month in a sealed ghetto, suffered from the official importation of only oats, grains, beets, carrots and turnips.<sup>85</sup>

Palfinger – who had formerly worked in the Lodz ghetto – had been appointed to run Warsaw's *Transferstelle* at its inception in December 1940. His office was at the center of the controversy. Its job was to regulate the flow of any goods – including food and medical supplies – or raw materials into the ghetto, set prices for the sale of finished goods and oversee their transfer out. It was the sole arbiter in all financial transactions and the price levels. So far Palfinger and his fellow attritionists had used their authority to attempt the starvation of Warsaw's Jews.

From their point of view, the ghetto's population still possessed a massive amount of wealth and it was the German duty to hemorrhage those resources. Indeed, the

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<sup>83</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 66 & 436.

<sup>84</sup> Browning, 125.

<sup>85</sup> Kermisz et al, 55.

Government General's Medical Officer Wilhelm Hagen, in response to an appeal that milk be provided to infants was bewildered. "How dare the Jews make such a proposal when they can satisfy all their needs with contraband?"<sup>86</sup>

This initial period of the *Transferstelle*'s rule (December 1939-April 1940) is the first clear instance of smuggling serving to affirm Nazi doctrine and interests. Palfinger, Schön and the other attritionists expected that Jews had not conformed to the previous decree ordering the surrender of their wealth greater than 2,000 zloty. Smuggling, in their view, corroborated the image of the Jewish shyster elaborated a few weeks earlier by Rosenberg: "It (the Jewish Question) is still an economic problem for all those who cannot solve their social questions under the Jewish financial dictatorship. It is a political problem of power, because in many states the will has not yet been found to break this financial dictatorship of Jewry."<sup>87</sup>

This confirmation of a stereotype is very similar to the irony of public health in the ghetto. Population density in the ghetto was 200,000 people per square mile.<sup>88</sup> Combined with an enforced food shortage and scarce medical or sanitation provision – corpses frequently lay on sidewalks for days wrapped in newspaper awaiting pickup – these policies meant that disease was bound to spread. In an attempt at securing greater amounts of food some ghetto residents would conceal corpses and not report the death. If the death was unknown the decedent was still entitled to their rations, thus enabling their

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<sup>86</sup> Sloan, 149. (Entry of 6 April 1941).

<sup>87</sup> Stackelberg and Winkle, ed., 338.

<sup>88</sup> Israel Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1945: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), 60.

friends or family to get extra food.<sup>89</sup> In the ghetto's case, typhus spread by lice was the most rampant illness.<sup>90</sup>

Productionists ran the ghetto for a brief period. Their ideas temporarily took precedence and their advocates became ghetto officials. Crucial to the productionists' victory was the 15 May 1941 appointment of Max Bischof to the administration of the *Transferstelle* with instructions to make the ghetto self-sufficient.<sup>91</sup> His tool to achieve that end was liberating the *Transferstelle* from its close association with the *Judenrat* and thereby an attempt at commanding the ghetto's entire economy. There was some remarkable turnaround under this administration. Income from legally produced goods from the ghetto in June 1941 only totaled 300,000 zloty. By November, it had increased to 1.2 million zloty.<sup>92</sup>

Although there was ghetto manufacturing almost none of it was cottage industry of the variety that would empower individuals to subsist by this method, no matter how demeaning it may be. As forced laborers, Jews had supported the German war effort since the beginning of the Nazi occupation. The first forced labor battalions dug ditches,

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<sup>89</sup> Ziedens, Larissa Z., "Optimism and Revolt of the Oppressed: A Comparison of Two Polish Jewish Ghettos of World War II," *Political Psychology* 18 (1997): 52.

<sup>90</sup> No absolute numbers confirm this statement. However, it is the consensus opinion of ghetto diarists and memoirists. One notable exception is Emanuel Ringelblum who, for some of the ghetto's earlier period, declared that disease outside the ghetto was more persistent. This seems to be a very rare departure on his part from chronicling only items and events he and his close *Oyneg Shabbat* (Joy of the Sabbath) associates had personal knowledge or experience of. Perhaps it can be attributed to the strong emotion he felt as evidenced by passages such as the following: "A very interesting question is that of the passivity of the Jewish masses, who expire with no more than a slight sigh... Why haven't we done the things we threatened the world with a year ago – robbery and theft...?" Sloan, 206. (Entry of 11 July 1941).

<sup>91</sup> Schön and Palfinger's ouster did not come through till early May but was retroactively effected to 15 March.

<sup>92</sup> Israel Gutman, *Resistance: The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), 93.

paved roads and otherwise enabled the war machine. Now that the ghetto was in place Jewish manufacturers became preferred producers for the Wehrmacht. In Adler's words: "As a rule, Jewish industry operated clandestinely and therefore avoided any planning...to its great fortune, the masses of German troops were in urgent need of various supplies and equipment. Thus with the help of the German authorities there sprouted up plans to manufacture brushes, mattresses, beds, clothing, furs, shoes."<sup>93</sup>

Historian Josef Kermisz pointed out the strength of the trade as an extra tie between Aryan Poles and their former Jewish neighbors. "Jewish manufacturers and artisans obtained raw materials illegally, having them smuggled from the Aryan side. The contact of the Ghetto with the outside world was so extensive that various raw materials, which would appear from time to time at the Aryan side, were directly transmitted to the Ghetto to be processed there."<sup>94</sup>

This wealth of finished goods was doubly illegal since their raw materials avoided the *Transferstelle* and the Army trucks or professional smugglers that took delivery entered and exited by separate gates with special passes or simple bribes. The draw for the *Wehrmacht* was cheaper prices, fewer fees and almost no middlemen.

The army deliberately circumvented the civilian administration of the General Government to avoid the high duties normally paid to the transferring office. Moreover, the army, anxious for the prompt delivery of desperately needed material, was willing to buy directly from Jewish manufacturers, even when it meant paying higher prices, in order to avoid German manufacturers and the middlemen who were inclined to pocket some of the profits."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Adler, 152.

<sup>94</sup> Josef Kermisz, ed., "Emmanuel Ringelblum's Notes, Hitherto Unpublished", *Yad Vashem Studies* 7 (1968), 175.

<sup>95</sup> Gutman, *Resistance*, 93.

The export value of this illegal manufacture was tallied by the underground archives, through one of their secret surveys, for five months in 1941 at 10 million zloty or 3.5 times greater than its legal counterpart.<sup>96</sup> This is the same period when Judenrat Chairman Adam Czerniakow stated that legal food importation accounted for 1.8 million zloty monthly, while illegal imports ran up to between 70 and 80 million zloty.<sup>97</sup>

The productionist takeover was welcomed as a switch to reasonable authority. Bischof's superior, Commissioner of the Jewish District Heinz Auerswald, was "a man the Jews thought at first was a friend of theirs and an honest man."<sup>98</sup> Czerniakow recalled the assurances Auerswald first made him 13 May 1941: "his attitude to the Council was objective and matter of fact, without animosity."<sup>99</sup> Despite pledges offered by the new administration, ghetto policy hardly changed and the attritionists continued to have their say. In the month following Czerniakow's first meeting with Bischof and Auerswald, he detailed a new administration bent on titles and the outward appearance of change – factors that would reduce Czerniakow's credibility in the ghetto – even though they changed their rhetoric in regard to Jews. In less than a month, it was apparent that Palfinger still had important influence and Nazi authorities would rather see smuggling than open Jewish-Aryan relations.

To Czerniakow's proposal, made 3 June 1941, that starvation in the ghetto be eased by purchasing "potatoes, etc." on the free market – an effort that would reduce

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<sup>96</sup> Gutman, *Resistance*, 93.

<sup>97</sup> Kermisz et al, 305. Entry of 6 December 1941.

<sup>98</sup> Sloan, 236. (Entry of 22 November 1941).

<sup>99</sup> Raul Hilberg, Stanislaw Staron and Josef Kermisz, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Adam Czerniakow: Prelude to Doom* (New York: Stein and Day, 1979), 234.

smuggling Czerniakow included in his pitch – Bischof agreed in principle. Then he asked for the opinion of Palfinger, who happened to be present. Palfinger replied that it would be an “insult to authority.” Bischof then turned down the proposal.<sup>100</sup> Czerniakow learned a few days later what Auerswald and Bischof had been considering since before they took office. In spite of the unchecked spread of disease, illicit trade was to be tolerated. “He (Auerswald) indicated that so far as smuggling is concerned the authorities are looking the other way but that they will take the sternest measures against people leaving the ghetto. The reason – the epidemic.”<sup>101</sup> Bischof and Auerswald were tacitly approving smuggling so long as Germans and Poles did all the moving outside the ghetto.

Regardless of the productionists’ victory in the dispute over how to manage the Warsaw ghetto, the status quo enacted by attritionists remained the norm. The only difference was that the new Nazi ghetto administrators viewed smuggling in a different light. It was no longer a means by which Jews would be absolutely impoverished through the bleeding of their goods but a method of reinvigorating the ghetto’s economy so Jews would cease to be a burden on the Nazi state until deportations could be carried out.

Smuggling could also be argued to have served Nazis and their accomplices most directly when it financially benefited them. With the establishment of the *Transferstelle* in the month following the closing of the ghetto, any goods brought to the ghetto without first Palfinger’s and later Bischof’s approval were necessarily contraband. This meant that not just goods snuck through holes in the wall or over the wall by means of ladders

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<sup>100</sup> Kermisz, et al, 246.

<sup>101</sup> Kermisz, et al., 248.

were illegal. Anything that passed the gates unofficially was illegal. These were routes some very organized smugglers used.

## CHAPTER IV

At the point where a physical barrier had reinforced the social ones constructed between Jews, Poles and Germans this paper advances its focus. Before, understanding landscape changes in the light of larger German policies was key. From now on, interpreting the landscape of smuggling, physical and abstract is the rule. This is especially important for comprehending illicit trade, as smugglers were beholden to the geography for their occupation and the new dictates of their exchanges – social, professional and otherwise.

Cut off from their city and their livelihoods, struggling to subsist, Warsaw's Jews impressed and evaded their captors. Jews managed to find new sources of raw materials and new outlets for finished goods. Specialists whose training was not so practical found other ways to make a living. All the while a trade imbalance persisted that made all these alternatives stopgap measures.

Not everyone, however, was an artisan or fortunate enough to get a job manufacturing, and they too had been impoverished, cut off from their livelihoods. Still, there were new demands to be met and services that started to meet those needs. Ghetto inmate Henryk Brysker remarked in his journal: "People who were engineers yesterday are happy to get a job as a doorman today; a lawyer – a peddler of candies...a lawyer – a prison guard; and a street peddler who stuck with his vocation – that is the gallery of the reshuffled classes."<sup>102</sup>

The Jewish Self-Aid Society (JSS) estimated in December 1941 that 65,000 of the ghetto's residents were employed, most in salaried positions. The penniless numbered

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<sup>102</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 77.



more than 200,000.<sup>103</sup> The remaining 100,000-150,000 fell somewhere in between and were usually petty traders or just people selling their last possessions off.

Exploiting Jewish labor had long been Government-General policy. From the earliest days of the occupation Jews had been drafted into labor battalions. That continued in the sealed ghetto. In its 21 July 1941 issue *Gazeta Żydowska* encouraged the use of labor as the last factor of production left to Jews. “The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw lacks raw materials, sufficient capital, and significant industry. The only means at its disposal is labor. If labor is properly exploited, it can serve as the sole means of export capable of balancing import.”<sup>104</sup>

To outward appearances this seems to have been an accepted idea. The Judenrat unofficially allowed the affluent to bribe their way out of work details. That money was then used to pay the poor who went with the outfits.<sup>105</sup> Ringelblum noted the determination the poor exhibited to work outside the walls. He recorded that it took beatings, gun shots, severe woundings and an occasional death to ward off the mobs who tried to board trucks at 103 Plaza Żelazna during shift changes for *roboty*<sup>106</sup> work outside the ghetto. “But why do they mob the truck? The answer is simple. People working

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<sup>103</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 77.

<sup>104</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 74.

<sup>105</sup> Raul Hilberg, “The Ghetto as a Form of Government” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (1980), 105.

<sup>106</sup> Czech for forced labor. The term was popularized by the 1920 production of Karel Capek’s *Rossum’s Universal Robots* or *R.U.R.* He intentionally used a derivative of the term to describe the artificial humans that were the subject of his play.

outside the Ghetto are given two good soups and half a kilo of bread a day. That's the reason for the mob.'"<sup>107</sup>

However, others do not accept the idea that cheap Jewish labor was the only choice. Ghetto survivor and scholar Israel Gutman downplayed attempts to exploit Jewish skilled labor in the ghetto for meager wages and extra soup allotments. Gutman's point is well made and carries to a greater conclusion but does not account for the needs of the unskilled or those whose skills did not fit into the production mould.

The *Transferstelle* under its earlier attritionist management was not going to allow sufficient food into the ghetto. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC or the Joint) and the Commission for Polish Relief (CPR) were hamstrung by bureaucratic red tape to such a degree that they were unable to import necessities with any consistency.

The Joint was concerned with the inability of the British Admiralty and German occupation authorities to reach an agreement about aid for conquered peoples. The British Navy would not allow ships through their blockade without supervisors to assure the food would go to needy Poles. Germany refused the concession and the Joint eventually gave up any additional attempts because each scheme for importing essentials into Poland would likely end up materially benefiting Germany.<sup>108</sup> Aside from 7,000 cans of Nestle milk sent to the ghetto in 1941, the Joint was unable to accomplish its mission.

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<sup>107</sup> Sloan, 274-275. Entry of 22 May 1942.

<sup>108</sup> Charles G. Roland *Courage Under Siege: Starvation, Disease and Death In the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 110.

The CPR, which was modeled on Herbert Hoover's post-World War I relief organizations, had some successes but was ultimately forced to shutter its Polish operation. In June 1940 the CPR sent 540,000 pounds of evaporated milk and 1.26 million pounds of rye flour to distribution centers in Poland. An accompanying official personally witnessed that about 25 percent of the food went to Jewish children.<sup>109</sup>

The simplest method of help had problems of its own. Initially parcels were delivered through the postal service to Jews in the Warsaw ghetto. The ghetto post office delivered 113,006 parcels in June 1941.<sup>110</sup> Particularly fortunate in this case were Americans. Diarist Mary Berg's mother was an American and regularly received packages. "Once a month, all American citizens receive a large package of foodstuffs for the sum of eleven zlotys – but its real value is three hundred, and it often contains articles that are unobtainable elsewhere at any price whatsoever."<sup>111</sup>

Eventually the parcels proved too tempting and were seized if they weighed too much or if Jews received too many. "During September [1941], 15,000 parcels, with an estimated value of several million zloty, were requisitioned. They requisition parcels over 6 pounds if they contain leather, flour, fats; under 4 pounds if there are several parcels for one addressee." The packages' contents were initially redistributed through a grocery store and finally given directly to an Order Police Battalion.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Roland, 110.

<sup>110</sup> Roland, 36.

<sup>111</sup> S.L. Shneiderman, ed., *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing up in the Warsaw Ghetto* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications Limited, 2007), 31.

<sup>112</sup> Kermisz et al, 286; entry of 8 October 1941. Order Police here should not be confused with the Jewish Police under the authority of the Judenrat. This case refers to a German Reserve Police Battalion.

The worst irony of the failure of outside organizations to provide for the ghetto was that the Jews of Warsaw had a tradition of charity, and organizations existed that were capable of effectively distributing what aid arrived. Those certainly made the best of what they had in mitigating the deadly factors and providing for the orphaned, dispossessed, ill and indigent. One example is the JSS, a branch of the *Judenrat* that ran soup kitchens. August 1941 saw 140,000 meals provided daily by the JSS.<sup>113</sup> Henryk Goldszmit – better remembered by his penname Janusz Korczak was an author, educator and founder of an orphanage who is remembered as bravely accompanying his charges to Treblinka and death even though he had been offered escape. He portrayed the dwindling generosity of ghetto inmates thus: “At first you gave willingly, then without enthusiasm; first from a sense of duty, then according to the law of inertia, by force of habit and without feeling; and then, finally, unwillingly, with anger in despair.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Browning, 158.

<sup>114</sup> Roland, 39.



1940-41 The sign at top left announces “Soup in the courtyard, first floor, apt. 47.”

An incident involving Czerniakow, whose economic policies were described as “liberal” and “laissez-faire,” also serves to illustrate the point well.<sup>115</sup> Calling upon a wealthy man who had recently spent 4,000 zloty in one of the ghetto’s more extravagant locations, Czerniakow tried to get a donation for the charities the Judenrat participated in or administered. The man offered 15 zlotys. Czerniakow responded by saying, “You will give not 15, but 25, and not in zlotys but in thousands of zlotys,” and had the man jailed. He would only release him upon payment of 10,000 zlotys with a pledge for 15,000 more.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 82.

<sup>116</sup> Kermisz et al, 69.

## CHAPTER V

Chaim Kaplan's worries about Germans committing crimes in the seclusion of the ghetto aside, Germans gravitated toward their guard posts. With the exception of citywide trams that carried Poles and Germans *in transit* at top speed under police escort through the ghetto, non-Jews did not see the inside of the ghetto. Everyone needed a pass to get in and sources indicate those were not forthcoming. Total isolation was a fact.

Tram service had been interrupted for the city during the German siege when 80 percent of the electric track was destroyed. Then eccentric transportation methods cropped up. The ghetto had similar transportation developments.<sup>117</sup> Jews in the ghetto period were limited to three special tram lines that ran only in the ghetto. Some measures reduced their ability to use even this limited service. From 30 October 1940 Jews had to purchase a five-zloty card monthly for the right to buy tram tickets. Without it a ticket cost a Jew four times regular price.<sup>118</sup>

Jews had brief encounters with their Polish neighbors after ghettoization on footbridges or streets that crossed Polish territory. Across Chlodna Street from the small ghetto (about 100,000 residents) to the large ghetto (about 300,000 residents) gates could be moved to block Gentile traffic and allow Jews to cross until a footbridge was erected in January 1942. There were also footbridges over Przebieg and Sapiezynska Streets.

Otherwise, only one situation remained where Jews and Gentiles might interact in an uncontrolled atmosphere. The Municipal Courts at 53-55 Leszno Street fronted the ghetto on Leszno Street. It was accessible on the Aryan side by a narrow corridor down

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<sup>117</sup> Engleking & Leociak, 108. The ghetto had horse-drawn omnibus services – Kohn-Hellerki – until horse meat became too valuable as a food. Then there were rickshaws. In other ghettos even sedan chairs were seen.

<sup>118</sup> Engleking & Leociak, 110.

Biala Street and from there along Chlodna Street between the large and small ghettos. Everyone had business to transact here so it was ideal for moving between the ghetto and the rest of the city. Employees in the court were aware of the traffic and were quite amenable to bribes. Ghetto survivor Hela Rufeisen recalled a Polish policeman there asking her if she was Polish. Her response: “Sometimes yes, sometimes no.”<sup>119</sup>

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Other than that, only illicit means remained for Jews to interact with their old neighbors. Smuggling became a sole means of contact between the two. German officials nominally tried to curb smuggling through terror, creating institutions for combating it, increased punishments up to death and reshaped ghetto boundaries. Despite their efforts, it thrived. Ghetto observers were skeptical of anti-smuggling measures anyway.

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<sup>119</sup> Engleking & Leociak, 453.

Of all the anti-smuggling endeavors the changes one could ascribe to landscape changes – restrictions on movement, boundary changes and enhanced observation – were perhaps the most effective. Their implementation also reflected the changing attitude of the Nazi leadership toward their Jewish captives, notably the changes spurred by the war in Russia and the reverses suffered there.

The rude awakening of 16 November 1940 had left Varsovian Jewry without sufficient means to provide for itself. Earlier impoverishment had already diminished this capacity. For instance, Jews were not supposed to import furniture into the ghetto. Despite fear of punishment, people did it anyway. Kaplan noted: “If we were to observe the conquerors’ edicts literally we would die in a day. By law a Jew is not permitted to remove the furniture when he vacates his apartment; in practice, however, the streets of Warsaw are full of carts loaded with furniture.”<sup>120</sup> It was only natural, therefore, that Jews would turn to a time-tested method for sustaining their lives: smuggling. As Ringleblum noted: “There is good reason for the proverb that three things are indomitable: the German Army, the British Isles, and Jewish smuggling.”<sup>121</sup>

The ghetto landscape is the strongest evidence that Nazis intended their captives to smuggle. Originally, the ghetto walls were erected between properties instead of the center of streets. This allowed ghetto inmates to tunnel through bordering homes or to walk across roofs. There was also less chance of surveillance since guards could not actually patrol the entire border.

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<sup>120</sup> Abraham I. Katsh, ed., *The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (New York: Collier Books, 1973), 212. (22 October 1940).

<sup>121</sup> Sloan, 265. (Entry of 8 May 1942)



Smuggling's first incarnation was a passive and short-lived act. Poles would bribe guards to overlook certain stretches of the wall that they might climb to purchase trade goods from the impoverished Jews inside. Vladka Meed witnessed a particularly thriving center of such activity, Parysowski Place. "Enterprising Gentiles scaled the ghetto wall to purchase wearing apparel, underwear, shoes, sewing machines, and other items from the Jews who, in their desperation, parted with their belongings for ridiculously small sums."<sup>122</sup> These are many of the same items Jews would lose upon entry into concentration camps.

The greatest irony of this early smuggling was not the unfair compensation Meed lamented but the irrevocable loss of livelihood the transactions represented. In losing spare clothing and household goods, Jews were being degraded to subsistence survivors. In losing items like sewing machines they were ceasing to be tailors, cottage industrialists and self-sufficient households.

A seemingly effortless method of early ghetto smuggling was made possible by the initial alignment of the ghetto with existing property boundaries and streets. This was through downspouts. Money, milk, flour and sugar were easily sent through this way. Jews inside the ghetto attached money to a string to be pulled up. Poles on the other side used gravity to send the consumables back.

Another method that relied on the initial orientation of the ghetto was wall-to-wall tunneling. This practice was the greatest boon to illicit trade as it made smuggling without detection easy for anyone. German passage in the ghetto was already limited due

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<sup>122</sup> Vladka Meed, *On Both Sides of the Wall: Memoirs from the Warsaw Ghetto* (Jerusalem, Israel: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1972), 99.

to their need for a pass to enter beyond their guard posts at the gates. Now houses that fronted the ghetto on one side and the ‘free’ city on the other became known as dens. A hole in the wall at a den became a valuable thing. Czerniakow noted this joke: “[S]ome Jewish fellow gave his daughter, as a dowry, a hole in the wall, which is in use 24 hours a day.”<sup>123</sup> Resistance fighter Vladka Meed recalled a going rate of 75 zloty for using someone’s hole to pass contraband through from one side to the other.<sup>124</sup> Polish resistance fighter and Government-in-Exile liaison Jan Karski used this system to gather intelligence about the ghetto. “With bribery, circumspection, a willingness to take the risk of being caught, and a thorough knowledge of the cellars, the passage was comparatively easy. Indeed, at that time, the building had become like a modern version of the River Styx which connected the world of the living with the world of the dead.”<sup>125</sup>

Of course, while the ghetto was directly linked to the Aryan side of Warsaw the tops of buildings were open to smuggling, too. People could walk across rooftops and utilize trapdoors in conjunction with their Polish partners. Symcha Binem Motyl likened the late night process to a detective film. Smugglers met at a prearranged point, waited for a signal, and then passed sacks and baskets of meats, fruits, vegetables and grains.<sup>126</sup>

Finally, the original ghetto boundaries included the Jewish cemetery. Here was an open space ideal for moving large goods. Grand pianos, disassembled machinery, even live cattle moved through the cemetery. The cattle were especially important for the

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<sup>123</sup> Kermisz, et al., 231 (Entry of 7 May 1941)

<sup>124</sup> Meed, 96.

<sup>125</sup> Jan Karski, *Story of a Secret State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1944), 329.)

<sup>126</sup> Engelking & Leociak, 452-453.

kosher consumption still observed by some Jews. They would become fewer and fewer as the ghetto continued.

These methods, with the exception of the court were rendered obsolete when the ghetto was reorganized by the exclusion or inclusion –usually exclusion – of more territory. In part as an effort to combat smuggling, during 1941 the borders were realigned with the centers of streets.

However on 3 June of the same year that border realignments were undertaken supposedly to curb black marketeering, ghetto authorities had considered Czerniakow's proposal for Jews purchasing food in legal transactions to curb the black market. They had considered it an 'insult to authority.' Smuggling was preferable to open Jewish-Aryan relations.

Combating smuggling was only one reason for redrawing the borders. More territory was needed in the city proper as war took its toll on the German homeland. Whereas earlier the need for Lebensraum had caused Jews and Poles to be driven from their homes, now it was the German need for shelter from bombing. Kaplan described the German refugees in late 1940 as people who complained about the wealth their compatriots were plundering in safe Poland. He included this scribble a German soldier wrote on the side of a trolley. "We ride back and forth. We have no more homeland."<sup>127</sup>

The Russian war, begun in June 1941, intensified anti-Jewish measures on the whole. The ghetto's peak population in March 1941 of 460,000 added to the problem. As the war heated up and Russians began bombing Warsaw, anti-Jewish measures took a

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<sup>127</sup> Kaplan, 209 (Entry of 12 October 1940)

new tint. At the ghetto's founding and through its first months Nazi officials accepted smuggling as a necessary fact for Varsovian Jews so long as they never actually left its walls themselves. Even that proviso was overlooked in the face of bribes. They were heard to utter sentences like: "How dare the Jews make such a proposal [importing milk for infants] when they can satisfy all their needs with contraband?"<sup>128</sup> This attitude was replaced by the death penalty in 1941. Ultimately it was replaced by the irrevocable reorganization of the ghetto landscape with its destruction at the end of ghetto uprising in May 1943.

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<sup>128</sup> Sloan, 149. (Entry of 6 April 1941)

## CHAPTER VI

During this time the three generally recognized categories of smuggler came into their own. Authorities are largely agreed on this. In his book *Resistance*, Uprising leader and historian Israel Gutman classified smugglers into three groups. The way each worked with the situation is emblematic of the larger Nazi population policy.

The first was the highly organized and profitable “wholesale” smuggling.<sup>129</sup> Ringelblum reported enormous costs and profits from the coordinated groups. A group could make 35,000 zloty in one week with costs – purchases on the Aryan side and bribes – of only 19,000 zloty.<sup>130</sup> Such margins were possible because of what the bands were bringing in. At highly inflated prices they sold “meats, fats, and luxury items...which only the rich could afford, rather than potatoes and bread, which took up too much space and were less profitable.”<sup>131</sup> Natan Zelichower described the benefits of this trade as “the best food and drink.”<sup>132</sup> All it cost him were the goods he and his companions shipped out and the bribes they paid their work supervisor to look the other way.

The audacity of this group was amazing. They acted as any regular, above-board business might in Warsaw. The gates were open to them because of the bribes they paid and therefore they did not need to use the other routes. Reports confirm that when this group took to the walls it usually caused a controversy in the form of bullets from the guards who were angered at missing the bribes they would have gotten had the shipment come in through the gate.

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<sup>129</sup> Gutman, 90.

<sup>130</sup> Sloan, 279. (Entry of 25 May 1942).

<sup>131</sup> Gutman, 92.

<sup>132</sup> Michal Grynberg, ed., *Words to Outlive Us: Eyewitness Accounts of the Warsaw Ghetto* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 223.

This class of smuggler did not exist to cure inequalities or feed the starving masses. Szpilman took this view: “In fact the ghetto did not depend on smuggling to feed itself.”<sup>133</sup> Indeed, some of the smugglers who moved the most merchandise were in the pay of the Gestapo and can be more accurately labeled profiteers and collaborators rather than resisters.

Altruism was not the business smuggler’s aim. Yet they were hardly stingy with the profits. Ringelblum, who filled the role of impartial observer quite well, pointed out the smuggler’s’ penchant for living the good life and code of honor in their conduct. Their parties were renowned for the bulk of food served. This grew out of a sense of immediacy in a smuggler’s life. Remember: “Smugglers love a good time, since they are never sure how tomorrow will end (with a bullet, an informer, arrest) – so it’s eat, drink, and be merry.”<sup>134</sup>

Smugglers also maintained their groups at great cost. When a wagon was intercepted or “burned” and the driver was imprisoned, his associates would support his family in his absence and pay his legal fees. If any group member were killed his family would likewise be cared for.<sup>135</sup> Never mind the fact that this business was in every sense of the word illegal. Smugglers also took out insurance policies against burning. A firm residing at 70 Nalewki Street insured wagons against burning at a base price with additional rates for supplemental protection.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Szpilman, 13.

<sup>134</sup> Sloan, 279. (Entry of 25 May 1942)

<sup>135</sup> Sloan, 279. (Entry of 25 May 1942)

<sup>136</sup> Sloan, 279. (Entry of 25 May 1942)

Necessarily it required a great deal of bribery to run such a business or any smuggling enterprise. Those receiving bribes included Polish Police (Blue), German Criminal Police (Kripo), Jewish Police (Order), Ukrainian and Lithuanian guards and plainclothes agents of the *Transferstelle*. Generally bribes ran at 100 zloty per cart. At the time of Bischof's appointment to the *Transferstelle* a kilogram of bread cost 12 zloty and a kilogram of potatoes 3-4 zloty. For perspective, consider that in April 1942 ghetto guards shot and beat smugglers who were bringing their cargo over the walls – which usually only cost about 75 zloty.<sup>137</sup> The remaining smugglers were only allowed leave to go once they had paid 40,000 zloty since that's what their actions had cost the guards at the going rate of 100 zloty per cart. To the criticism that perhaps this was overestimation, keep in mind that the smugglers were able to pay the fee immediately.<sup>138</sup>

Bribery is ubiquitous in its relation to illicit trade. Some discussion of it is necessary to a better understanding. It is important to note here that bribery does not always carry negative connotations. Neither can it be described as all good.

Czerniakow noted in correspondence the official acceptance of bribes from the affluent to excuse them from labor details. The 'ill-gotten' money was then used to remunerate the poor who were unable to skip work assignments.<sup>139</sup> These of course were not the only bribes taken by the Judenrat or otherwise.

Ringelblum noted the omnipresent nature of bribery – including that which Czerniakow advocated. A bribe paid to the Jewish Police could save one from labor in a

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<sup>137</sup> Meed, 103.

<sup>138</sup> Sloan, 177 & 264. (Entries of 11 May 1941 and 22 May 1942).

<sup>139</sup> Hilberg, 105.

Todt Organization work group. The requisite amount increased exponentially the further one traveled to various assembly points after being rounded up. Five to 10 zloty were sufficient when apprehended. At district assemblies the going rate was 100 zloty. If one reached the central assembly 500 zloty were required to prevent leaving the Ghetto under these circumstances. “Of course, it was the poor people, who didn’t have the money to bribe the police, who went.”<sup>140</sup>

Ringelblum’s diary is not the only evidence that proves the existence of such schemes. The Jewish Police caught Samuel Puterman in one of the Ghetto-clearing *Aktionen*. The officers charged him 30 to 50 zloty to send pleas to his family for the necessary 3,000 zloty to be released from the *Umschlagplatz*<sup>141</sup>. The money never came.<sup>142</sup>

As with other professions Jews had made a significant contribution to the Polish legal community. However, practicing law in the Government-General required a special permit. Jewish attorneys were denied this permit despite entreaties by Czerniakow. In fact, no Jewish lawyers would be authorized to perform the job they had trained for until 28 were approved as consultants 11 March 1942, only three-and-a-half months before the major deportations began.<sup>143</sup> Many of them turned to the *Ordnungsdienst* or Order Service. Politically active diarist Hersh Wasser noted the make-up of the force. “Eighty

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<sup>140</sup> Sloan, 284. (Entry of 30 May 1942)

<sup>141</sup> Transfer point.

<sup>142</sup> Grynberg, 206-207.

<sup>143</sup> Kermisz et al, 116 and 334. Entry of 11 March 1942



per cent of them are rich men's sons trying to avoid labor camps; and only incidentally do they sport their uniforms and indulge their power instincts.”<sup>144</sup>

A group of about 1,600 men, the Order Police – marked by their blue headbands and badge insignia – were initially charged with regulating traffic flow, escorting work battalions, preventing smuggling and otherwise maintaining control in the ghetto. Most welcomed the sight of Jewish policemen at first, but the Order Service would eventually assume more dubious roles and come to symbolize collaboration. Berg wrote in her diary 22 December 1940: “I experience a strange and utterly illogical feeling of satisfaction when I see a Jewish policeman at a crossing – such policemen were completely unknown in pre-war Poland.”<sup>145</sup> Ringelblum observed in his diary two months later: “The Jewish populace sides with the Jewish policeman: ‘you would have minded a Polish policeman, so why don’t you mind a Jewish one!’ There are intelligent policemen who dislike to order people about.”<sup>146</sup>

Since the Order Police received no wages, they were particularly open to bribery. As Wasser noted in his diary: “Every platoon (50 people) keeps a kitty into which all pay their earnings, later shared out equally. Police “earnings” consist of various pretext-monies from petty Jewish smugglers...bribes...and simple extortion.”<sup>147</sup> In an attempt to curb this weakness for bribes, Jewish policemen were entitled to Aryan Rations starting 21 June 1941.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Josef Kermisz, ed., “Daily Entries of Hersh Wasser, ”*Yad Vashem Studies* 15, Jerusalem, 1983, 247.

<sup>145</sup> Berg, 34.

<sup>146</sup> Ringelblum, 125-126. Entry of 19 February 1941.

<sup>147</sup> Wasser, 247. Entry of 22 January 1941.

<sup>148</sup> Kermisz et al, 251. Entry of 21 June 1941.

The organization's history largely proves that any attempts to curb bribe solicitation were ineffective. In December of 1942, Ringelblum explained the changed perception of the Order Service. "The Jewish Police had a bad reputation even before the deportation. Unlike the Polish Police, which did not take part in the abductions for the labor camps, the Jewish Police did engage in this dirty work. The police were also notorious for their shocking corruption and demoralization."<sup>149</sup>

The position of authority and potential for bribery attracted other elements besides out of work professionals. Adler remarked that several criminals tried to join the Order service. "Sometimes... a criminal would obstinately and arrogantly continue in his attempt to get into the Service, even resorting to making threats against us."<sup>150</sup> While Adler maintains that he blocked attempts by known criminals to enter the service, they found other outlets to authority and thereby easy money. One particularly persistent applicant made a point of visiting to say he did not need the Order service anymore since he had found work with the Gestapo.<sup>151</sup>

While it is uncertain how this individual was being employed by the Gestapo, given his predilection for police work, it is likely that he joined the Control Office for Combating the Black Market and Profiteering in the Jewish District of Warsaw, also known as the Thirteen for its address at 13 Leszno St. Established in the Autumn of 1940, the Thirteen counted 500 personnel among its ranks. This became an outlet of employment for professionals and refugees as several prominent members were from

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<sup>149</sup> Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw*, 89.

<sup>150</sup> Adler, 12.

<sup>151</sup> Adler, 13.

Lodz or elsewhere. Exactly who its administrators Abraham Gancwajch and David Sternfeld answered to is uncertain. Evidence confirms that certain leaders – Gancwajch and Sternfeld included – were aligned with the Gestapo. They certainly did not listen to the *Judenrat* or the *Transferstelle*.

Like the Order Service, the Thirteen seemed to ape the German (Prussian) fetish for uniforms. The men with green headbands –sometimes called foresters– were officially to act as an extra bulwark against smuggling. Much like the Order Service, they abysmally failed while pocketing large bribes or partaking in the illicit trade themselves.

Its leaders became known for excess and good living. They were rather unliked because many suspected their allegiance to German officials that was only confirmed after the war. Perhaps as an attempt to change this perception the Thirteen set up aid stations and an Ambulance Service – light blue headbands. Two of its leaders – Morris Kohn and Zelig Heller – were best-known for running the bus and rickshaw services, called Kohnhellerki. A job there cost 1,000 zloty.<sup>152</sup> The two serve as an example of the ghetto’s impression of the Thirteen. Szpilman derisively remembered Kohn and Heller as magnates who were murdered because they bribed the wrong SS.<sup>153</sup>

The Thirteen always bothered Czerniakow, both as a matter of administration and personal taste. He once described a meeting with Gancwajch. “Gancwajch speaks as if he were straining every word through his dirty saliva and washing it in his mouth before uttering it.”<sup>154</sup> Auerswald eventually humored Czerniakow’s wishes and dissolved the

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<sup>152</sup> Kermisz et al, 259. Entry of 19 July 1941.

<sup>153</sup> Szpilman, 13 and 93.

<sup>154</sup> Kermisz et al, 250-251. Entry of 20 June 1941.

Thirteen and placed its men and materiel under the auspices of the *Judenrat* by a decree of 21 July 1941.<sup>155</sup>

Czeraniakow's bribe redistribution scheme appears to be mildly philanthropic but largely ineffective. The most powerful argument in support of the *Judenrat*'s policy is one they may have never even been aware of. Those who went outside the walls were empowered by their daily travels. And they understood this. Most Holocaust scholars should recall how Jews valued the *Ausweis*<sup>156</sup> and vied for them. Ringelblum noted that there was fierce competition to be on the trucks exiting the Ghetto for work. At 103 Plaza Zelazna (Iron Place), where outside workers changed shifts, there was regularly a mob attempting to board the trucks. It took fierce beatings and occasionally a killing to ward off the surplus employees. "But why do they mob the truck? The answer is simple. People working outside the Ghetto are given two good soups and half a kilo of bread a day. That's the reason for the mob."<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Kermisz et al, 259-260. Entry of 21 July 1941.

<sup>156</sup> Work card.

<sup>157</sup> Sloan, 289. (Entry of 30 May 1942)



A German policeman interrogating a Jew suspected of smuggling bread 1942 or 1943

Besides the 'generous' ration for themselves, these workers could make a big difference for their families. Since they were paid, they had money to buy extra food items from their Polish co-workers on the other side of the wall. They could bring this food to their families or sell it to their neighbors. This was Gutman's second group of smugglers. They risked confiscation and a severe beating if they were caught, but the potential reward was worth the risk. Thus, people who were being systematically starved – remember the meager food ration the Transferstelle allowed into the Ghetto – were able to procure additional sustenance and build a cash reserve for fluctuations in food prices.

Police shakedowns outwardly have very little redeeming value. The Jewish Police come across largely as profiteer bullies who only made the Aktionen possible. However, their willingness to accept bribes was crucial to the professional smugglers' employment.

Also, in their defense, they were men with families for whom they had to provide. Those families were collateral for their good conduct and cooperation. A Jewish Police officer known only as Julian explained himself thus, using the example of Jewish Police in Minsk Mazowiecki who spurned their orders to assist in an Aktion. "Four hundred policemen with the administration in the lead refused to assist. That same day within the space of one hour the Germans shot all their families, nearly one thousand people. Then they themselves carried out the Aktion."<sup>158</sup>

The second group of smugglers consisted of the aforementioned poor who could not bribe their way out of work details but were paid in part with bribes the rich paid to be excused. Their employment entitled them to work outside the ghetto. This group was not as organized but nearly as effective. For the price of food on the outside— virtually guaranteed to be cheaper as twelve zloty, on average, bought a loaf of bread in the Ghetto and only 8.5 zloty were needed on the other side of the wall.<sup>159</sup> – they could feed their families and bring in extra money for added security. The greatest risk they ran was a beating at the gate for their daring since they generally did not have enough for a good bribe. Szpilman recounted his first detail on the outside when he borrowed 50 zloty from a coworker. Purchasing bread for 20 zloty and potatoes at 3 zloty a kilo, he sold them at

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<sup>158</sup> Grynberg, 212.

<sup>159</sup> Paulsson, 76.

50 and 18 zloty, respectively. “I had enough to eat for the first time in ages, and a little working capital still in hand to make my purchases next day.”<sup>160</sup>

From the first this group was a special one. They were the only inmates immune to the dangers of imprisonment or deportation for exiting the ghetto. They too could carry their goods directly through the gate. They did run the risk of an occasional beating and confiscation but their extra cash insulated them and their families against starvation.

Finally, Gutman counted children as a separate group. They were often a last ditch resource considering the risks they ran. When father and mother were out of employment and had bartered off their last tradable goods, young people who could fit through tight spaces, over walls and through gutters took their chance.

Children employed their talents on the Aryan side of the wall in one of two pursuits: begging or petty trade. When there was no seed money to begin an operation begging was the first option. Gutman noted, “...these children who slipped over to the ‘other side,’ begged, and were given some bread by the Poles (according to some accounts, frequently by women who were known antisemites but who could not stand the sight of hungry children).”<sup>161</sup>

No good estimates exist for this classification. However, one may piece together from their recollections that they were a largely ineffective group. Their difficulties resulted from the nature of their smuggling. A child’s success at procuring food rested almost exclusively on the ability to elicit pity. They were not employed so they had no relationships with entrepreneurial Polish coworkers who would trade food for wages or

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<sup>160</sup> Szpilman, 111.

<sup>161</sup> Gutman, 91.

goods. They also got no soup for their own fortification. Josef Ziemian's *Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* are the exception that proves the rule in this case. Ziemian's subject group, though at greater risk than their full-grown counterparts, effectively employed illicit trade as a survival strategy.

Much like their elder, professional counterparts the children Ziemian profiled displayed an uncanny comprehension of their situation. Interestingly, the cigarette sellers turned down offers of assistance. Ziemian was active with the Jewish National Council (ZKN). Through his connections, he was able to offer the boys and girls he found in Warsaw money, dens (code for a safe shelter), and Polish papers. All but one of the children refused the money. Only one child and an adult they found took the offer of a den. The child, Bolus, was the youngest of the group at 9, and he was too much of a liability to his friends. The adult was the Amchu-Man. His looks and age made passing as an Aryan impossible. The false papers were too good to turn down, though. Considering that schmalzers – Poles, or any Aryan, who would shake down a Jew at the threat of turning him over to the Gestapo – generally began blackmailing by asking for papers – and German officials who had to be obeyed were not above schmalzing – the papers were invaluable.

The children expressed sentiments similar to those Ringelblum noted in the professional set. Ziemian noted they constantly reminded themselves: “You only die once.”<sup>162</sup> By their own admission, the cigarette sellers turned down money because it had lost its typical meaning. “We don't need money,” Bull – the 16-year-old leader of the

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<sup>162</sup> Jozef Ziemian, *The Cigarette Sellers of Three Crosses Square* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications, 1975), 38.



cigarette leaders – told Ziemian the first time he offered the children 500 zloty.<sup>163</sup> When Ziemian tried again later, Bull told him, “What do we need money for? We may be gone tomorrow.”<sup>164</sup> When they made a big profit, the point was more acutely made. Two of the Jewish exiles sold newspapers. When the Resistance snuck an entire run of “false news” (reports of the war that accurately depicted Allied advances and German defeats) into the streets the papers were eventually going for 50-100 zloty. With the big haul the two ate a first-class dinner, bought fresh underwear, and restocked on cigarettes. Ziemian noted, “It was not in their nature to store money for a later day.”<sup>165</sup>

The children had other reasons to be wary of charity. Nazis frequently launched operations to apprehend Jews under the guise of philanthropy. There is also reason to believe that accepting an allowance could have endangered resourceful Jews like the cigarette sellers, anyway. A charity-case was particularly vulnerable to blackmailers. Their allowance was set. If they were robbed at the beginning of a pay period there would be no money to sustain them for a week or more. Furthermore, the more people who were aware of one’s surreptitious existence the greater the chances of being revealed.

Also in the tradition of their elder comrades, young smugglers did not stop when they had enough food for their family. A 12-year-old named Hoppy took his starting fee of 10 zloty, bought two loaves of bread with it, and sold the first for 14 zloty upon his

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<sup>163</sup> Ziemian, 31-32.

<sup>164</sup> Ziemian, 119.

<sup>165</sup> Ziemian, 118.

return to the ghetto. The other loaf fed his family. The proceeds bought potatoes and other food supplies.<sup>166</sup> The extra money was also necessary insurance against schmalzers.

There was a very real concept behind the edge to survival. A Jew on the Aryan side daily confronted challenges that required creativity and a sincere will to live. Nothing was free. Not even help. Just as freedom had to be purchased from schmalzers so too did help. During his escape from the Ghetto one cigarette seller traversed the sewers to the gentile part of Warsaw. Polish sewage workers discovered them and only offered to lead their party for a fee of 1,000 zloty per person. The child did not have the fee, payable at exit. Only quick thinking, quick movement, and his small size saved him, as he maintained a low profile, kept quiet, and rushed through the manhole before anyone could seize him. Arguably, someone living on the charity of one of the aid organizations would be neither capable of paying the fee nor discovering a way out of the situation, for they were the ones who were discovered in the first place – if only by another Jew, which could be life-threatening – because of their inability to conceal the most dangerous secret in early 1940s Warsaw.

Being smaller and without ready cash, the children were liable to suffer more and perhaps die from their beatings. Nazis and diehard anti-Semitic Ukrainians knew the children were useless for shakedowns and summarily executed them. If they did not die in the course of winning food, the little smugglers were usually the last members of their families to die. Should they make the transition from ghetto to the city proper, they often proved adept at survival in hiding. Ziemian's work and Gunnar Paulsson's *Secret City*:

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<sup>166</sup> Ziemian, 31-32.

*The Hidden Jews of Warsaw* are detailed studies that document this propensity on the part of children. In Ziemian's case, it was only with the aid of helpful young concealment specialists that he was able to survive the war.

Child-beggars' greatest danger lay in their economic circumstances. As mendicants they had nothing of value, making shakedowns useless. This also prevented them from paying bribes, particularly at ghetto gates. These unfortunate conditions combined with the small physical stature of children (an attribute that ideally equipped children to traverse the ghetto wall) made for people who were more likely to be abused by zealots and were, perversely, less able to deal with the cruel treatment. Two episodes that other Jews observed outline this cruel twist that both increased children's vulnerability and helplessness.

In one account a Jewish woman who was hiding as an Aryan recalled a small Jewish boy (about 4 or 5 by her guess) who was begging at the corner of Jerusalem Avenue and Krucza Street. No one gave him money, but they were forthcoming with bread. Then, "An elegant German came by, opened a sewer-grating, took the child, and threw him into the sewer."<sup>167</sup> Another woman of similar circumstances saw an SS patrolman throw a Jewish boy of 10 into the "...dark and turbulent waters of the Vistula. The boy did not even have time to utter a sound."<sup>168</sup>

The Jewish beggar-child's lack of anything of value is the primary reason for their summary executions by creative, cruel and efficient measures. When no financial gain could be had from these young ones, many 'Aryans' chose instead a cruel act from which

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<sup>167</sup> Paulsson, 69.

<sup>168</sup> Paulsson, 69.

they could derive the satisfaction of perhaps serving the Fuhrer or exercising complete control over another living creature. While there are many instances where overzealous anti-Semites would not spare a Jew for any price or object – zealots always being ones to disprove any economic theory – the majority of cases point to the supremacy of economic concerns in how Germans, Poles, and Volksdeutsche dealt with the Jews they personally encountered.

Other scholars combine children and outside employees – notably Barbara Engelking and Jacek Leociak in their work *The Warsaw Ghetto: A Guide to the Perished City*. Their reason for the distinction is unclear. The speculators remain in a class by themselves. This study maintains the original three divisions with the provision that they are the three maintained throughout the life of the ghetto. In the early period there was a great deal more on a smaller scale that would not fit into these categories. This study also adds resistance smuggling. Largely unrecorded and on a smaller scale, the unique character of this group and what it transported commands a separate treatment.

Included under this heading are fighters and artists. The hidden – Paulsson's secret city – and archivists are also counted here. They smuggled weapons and culture. They levied taxes and were protected for the contribution they made to Varsovian Jewry. This group remained after the landscape changed for good with the destruction of the ghetto and could be counted as the most successful of all the classifications.

Also briefly treated are the average people who bartered their tradable goods on the ghetto border in the early days. This group usually did not leave but was met on the inside of the wall by Poles willing to pay burn sale prices for furniture, clothing, cooking

utensils or other valuables. Obviously, this venue was not long-lived as there was a finite supply of useful goods for enticing enterprising people from Aryan Warsaw.

Eventually, as extermination took over from deportation in official policy, smuggling would outlive its usefulness. It was easiest to date this shift to Frank signing the death decree 15 October 1941. “Jews who leave their designated districts without authorization will be subject to the death penalty.” A reminder from Fischer the following month warned that the decree would be “applied with merciless severity.”<sup>169</sup> So on 22 November 1941 at the Gesia Street Prison twenty smugglers led singly from their cells were tied to posts and blindfolded then shot by Jewish Order Police. Ringelblum, who would prove to be accurate about smuggling and other trends, predicted it would not be the end for the black market. “Smuggling flourishes, and will continue to flourish, so long as the Germans have an interest in abetting it.”<sup>170</sup>

He was correct. German allowance made for a continued smuggling underworld until the middle of the following year. June 1942 would witness an unqualified change of smuggling policy. A special Jewish Border Patrol was created with a 10 zloty daily wage and better supply of fresh produce and bread to make them immune to bribe attempts.<sup>171</sup> In more violent and decisive measures, though, smugglers were rounded up at night. Frankenstein – an unbribable guard who resembled Boris Karloff with a reported need to

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<sup>169</sup> Gunnar S. Paulsson, *Secret City: The Hidden Jews of Warsaw, 1940,1945* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), 67.

<sup>170</sup> Sloan, 236. (Entry of 22 November 1941).

<sup>171</sup> Sloan, 302. (Entry of 25 June 1942).

kill at least one Jew before breakfast daily – disguised himself as a Jew complete with armband and shot smugglers in the act with a concealed machine gun.<sup>172</sup>

Some form of smuggling continued until the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was overcome after just less than a month 15 May 1943, but its apex had passed. After the major deportations began in the summer of 1942 the ghetto entered the shops period, so called for the German workshops that operated in the greatly reduced ghetto. Nazis commissioned scavengers to traverse empty sections of the ghetto to find items that had been left behind. This could be the personal material warehoused in the “Canadas”<sup>173</sup> of the Third Reich or useful equipment such as sewing machines. Some such scavengers reported that they attempted to conceal some valuables for illicit trade.

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<sup>172</sup> Sloan, 293. (Entry of 25 June 1942).

<sup>173</sup> Olga Lengyel related in her memoir *Five Chimneys* that seized valuables were held in a warehouse prisoners called Canada.

## CONCLUSION

As long as the separation of ethnicities remained an end goal of Nazis, the changing landscape of Warsaw remained an example of policy execution and the evolution of the Final Solution. The barriers, physical and social, that Nazis erected between their captive populations and themselves represented the embodiment of ideology. Smuggling was a reaction to that and was effective until the ghetto's dissolution.

Economic warfare designed to remove an undesirable population from all regular market interactions was the basis of the Nazi prerogatives that caused Jewish smuggling in the Warsaw Ghetto. This warfare produced restrictions on the amount of currency Jews could carry or hold in a bank, what and how much they could buy and where they were allowed to travel or reside. Although on the face of it smuggling seems to be a basic lifesaving reaction it also carries a sinister side in that it was a visible confirmation of the achievement of Nazi goals.

For Nazis realized the benefits of ghettoization. Jews were degraded to playing the part of huckster and conforming to the stereotypes Nazis had assigned them. Additionally, smuggling confirmed that Judenfrei – indeed all untermenschenfrei – utopias were a real possibility. In Germany proper before the Polish ghettos authorities had only gone so far as the Law on Rental Relations 30 April 1939, limiting Jews to living in Jewish-only apartments and requiring Jewish landlords to rent to other Jews. Ghettoization was not attempted. In Poland, Jews – frequently with the assistance of Poles – had to operate in another world separate from one any German would ever traverse.

Finally, smuggling in the Warsaw ghetto, though it did not cure inequalities or feed the Jewish masses, gave Nazi leaders an excuse to shirk the responsibility for sustaining a captive population cut off from its livelihood. Evidence solidly supports the contention that Nazi officials were content to let Jews smuggle if it meant they did not have to provide for them and they could continue to place unrealistic restrictions on the amount of goods importable to the ghetto via the *Transferstelle*.

When larger Nazi plans evolved from separation to elimination, the enforcement of anti-smuggling laws picked up. As the trains set out for Treblinka during the Great Deportation during the summer of 1942, German police hunted more eagerly for smugglers while Jewish firing squads were forced to execute them.

While this study is in itself worthwhile, it would be interesting to place it within the wider framework of Nazi policy shifts. Nazi policy in Warsaw was somewhat of an experiment and the 'scientists' in this case learned from their subjects and discovered that the very acts which they thought could be resistance were in fact just a job well done to the Nazis. Did this benefit of ghettoization get passed on to other German territories as the marking decree did?



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